

CHARELLE BROWN

THE

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

AFRICAN AMERICAN

ALUMNI

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT



The Ball State University African American Alumni Oral History Project

An Honors Thesis (HONR 390)

by

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Signed

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Abstract

This Honors thesis project follows an immersive learning course entitled the Ball State University African American Alumni Oral History Project. Through this undertaking, I worked on a team of nine members, not including the project director or the two assistant directors, and the main goal was to conduct and create videorecordings of approximately eighteen African American Ball State alumni concerning their lives before, during, and after attending or working at the university. While multiple histories have been published about Ball State, many of them do not include much about African American students or their culture on campus. As a result, our team pursued this project hoping to give a more rounded view of the university's past. The oral history project included seven weeks of learning about Ball State, the history of Muncie's African American community, and African American history through readings, assigned questions, a field trip, a film series, and a midterm exam. Closer to the last half of the semester, the team prepared for the actual interviews by attending workshops about oral history, learning how to work the HD video cameras, and researching our interviewees. Next, we learned about the transcription process and completed them. Eventually the interviews and the verbatim transcripts will be available on Ball State's Digital Media Repository. Some main elements of this thesis include an approximately twenty-minute documentary film about this entire experience, unedited copies of the two videorecorded interviews I conducted, the two verbatim transcripts I completed, and more.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank God for the guidance to this project and the strength and skills to complete it.

I would like to thank Dr. Michael Doyle for his tireless work to bring about this project and his willingness to see it through to the end. He not only taught about skills to be utilized in oral history and information about African American history, but he also introduced me to outside resources that have helped in these two categories as well.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Henry Hall and Mrs. Jenell Joiner for allowing me to use my newly acquired skill sets to tell their stories. I am grateful that they trusted me with details of their lives, families, and experiences at Ball State and beyond.

History does not always feel like history when it is in the making, but this has not been my experience with the Ball State University African American Alumni Oral History Project. Dr. Doyle, the project advisor, informed the participants of the magnitude of such an undertaking, it being the first oral history project to delve into the African American experience as a part of the university's history. Throughout the project, I reminded myself of what an honor being involved in telling the stories of my two interviewees was, despite the challenges of the course. I realize that so much history is now considered "lost" because documentation of details that could greatly increase our understanding of the events and times have not yet been found. On the other hand, diaries like that of Anne Frank and African American slaves are highly valued because they are primary sources about how the people felt, what they experienced, and how they lived. Readers can put themselves in the shoes of these individuals and try to experience life as the historical figures saw it. Consequently, if these stories die, a piece of history may die along with them. That is precisely why endeavors like this oral history project carry great weight. By doing these interviews, I have contributed to the preservation of history, specifically a piece of Ball State's history that has not yet been told in such a manner. When the production finishes and the products are placed on Ball State's Digital Media Repository, hopefully people will recognize the historical value that lies therein and be able to put themselves in the figurative shoes of alumni who walked the campus decades ago.

The Process

Pre-Interview Phase

The first seven weeks of the semester were run like a history course, filled with daily reading assignments and study questions, along with daily vocabulary words to be memorized, and littered with pop quizzes. This was the time for us to research and lay the foundation for our project. To learn more about Ball State's history, we read Edmonds and Geelhoed's *Ball State University: An Interpretive History*,¹ followed by *The Other Side of Middletown: Exploring Muncie's African American Community*.² Other resources used to expand our historical knowledge were the PBS documentary film series *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross*³ and a class fieldtrip to the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit. Not only did this research phase expose me to new, fascinating information about my culture and allow me to visit the museum that houses the largest display of African American history under one roof, but it also gave me the opportunity to be placed on a committee with two other team members. As a member of the Communications Committee, I edited a draft of the letter to be sent to the project's community partner asking him for assistance. I also drafted the thank you letter to be sent to the Charles H. Wright Museum towards the end of the process, the other committee members edited it, and it was forwarded on to our project advisor. Towards the end of this preliminary phase, we perused the third textbook in the course *Doing Oral History*⁴ and took a comprehensive midterm exam covering the three books we read and the specialized vocabulary terms we had been learning. Next, Dr. Doyle presented his oral history research methods workshop and we also went to Bracken Library's Archives and Special Collections for a workshop on conducting research on African American history, and the history of Ball State and of Muncie. We ended this phase by learning

how to adjust and operate the HD video cameras we were going to use to record the interviews.

Interview Phase

As we approached the middle of the semester, we were all assigned the task of preparing for a ten-minute practice interview. While we prepared as if we each of us was doing the entire interview, Dr. Doyle assigned us an order to go in when we arrived in our studio. The challenge lay in that none of us knew where the interviewers before us would leave off, so we could not accurately anticipate what topics we would be covering. My practice interview was with Mr. Miles (Tony) Robinson. This was my first time asking questions on camera and I was very nervous, but it turned out well. I learned that people continually refer to topics they find important, even if they do not say much about them. For instance, Mr. Robinson kept mentioning music throughout his interview and when asked about it specifically, he had a lot to say. He may not have focused on this subject without an interviewer there to ask questions, and we might have missed out on stories that played a major part in his life had we not been listening closely to what he was saying.

Soon after the practice interview, we had a critiquing session of each student's ten-minute practice interview for which we used a checklist for evaluating oral history interviews.⁵ This was followed by time away from the actual classroom to prepare for our interviews. My first time filming occurred less than two weeks later, and, again, I was nervous. In order to serve as the videographer, I learned about things like white balancing, affixing the microphone, adjusting audio levels, focusing the camera, adjusting the frame, and more. Videorecording allowed me to witness two additional interviews

and listen to others tell their stories without me being on camera and, consequently, being under too much pressure. By just sitting back and listening, I heard about some intriguing experiences.

Next, I conducted my two official oral history interviews. The first was with Mr. Henry O. Hall, an African American alumnus who graduated in the 1990s, and the second was with Mrs. Jenell Joiner, an African American alumna who graduated in the 1960s. In order to prepare in both cases, I first contacted the interviewees by phone, followed by an email when possible. Contacting Mr. Hall was fairly easy and I got to ask him questions about dates, achievements, and more from his Biographical Information Form that I was unsure of. We talked and then I emailed him again prior to the interview. With Mrs. Joiner, I had to call her hotel and leave a message because she was not at home and I only had her home phone number. She called me back that same day, however, and we got to establish some rapport before actually shooting the interview. Next, I went through the interviewees' Biographical Information Forms and made timelines. For Mr. Hall, I made two columns, one for his life and other events and the other for possible questions I could ask. With Mrs. Joiner, I made three columns. The first included events in her life and relevant information, the second included possible questions, and the third consisted of real-world events. In this way, I could compare certain real-world events, mainly those pertaining to the civil rights movement, to what was happening in the interviewee's life based on the years they occurred. The preparation ended with me typing up the questions and topics I wanted to take use as a guide during the interviews.

First, Mr. Hall provided unique insight because of his former position on Ball State's varsity football team. One story I remember involves the team being tested for

drugs before going to play an out-of-state game. He recalled that many of the black members' tests came back positive before the team left, so these players were excluded from the game. By contrast, many of the white player's tests also came back positive after the team had already left, yet the white players were allowed to play in the game. While the difference in timing was due to the type of drugs and not race, Mr. Hall explained how this injustice caused a rift in the trust between some of the players and the head coach. This interview boosted my confidence because Mr. Chris Reidy, the assistant project director who supervised this interview, gave me a lot of positive feedback.

Next, I was very excited about interviewing Mrs. Joiner because she was alive during the civil rights era and would probably have been around the same age as famous figures like Emmett Till and Anne Moody. She also had interesting experiences being from Gary, Indiana but going to visit Mississippi each summer with her family. Her version of civil rights events interested me. After all, when we read about these stories in textbooks or merely hear the facts, they seem like they have been solved and are still quite removed from the present. But hearing first-person accounts of what happened made it more real. Mrs. Joiner mentioned the murder of Schwerner, Goodman, and Chaney, three civil rights workers who went missing and were later found murdered in Mississippi in 1964. She presented the story and gave the gossip about what happened. The way she talked of this historic event in particular reinforced to me that these things are more than stories in textbooks. They involved real people who actually experienced what to the rest of us are merely stories. It made me wonder if anyone was charged in the case and how many more people in the South remember it. I wondered how the relationships down there are now and if the sheriff Mrs. Joiner mentioned is still alive.

Do the families of the three workers still hold grudges? How was life right after the incident? Did people change the way they interacted with the sheriff whom they suspected may have had a hand in the murders? Interviews like the ones I experienced make history seem less distant and more real.

Post-Interview Phase

After the interviews were over, more paperwork began. For one, the team attended an Archives and Special Collections transcription workshop, was e-mailed our individual interview audio tracks, and then was given a little under three weeks to complete the transcription process. We were told to allot approximately eight to ten hours of transcription per hour of actual interview footage, and both of my interviews exceeded one hour and thirty minutes. As a result, this process took a lot of time. Despite being tedious, however I got to work on acquiring a new set of skills and I appreciated revisiting the interviews and some of the stories Mr. Hall and Mrs. Joiner told. Writing verbatim accounts was a good way for me to practice documentation skills. Many employees must write things down and give accounts of events that happened to keep as records. Therefore, paying attention to detail is very important in this evidence-focused society, just as listening to small details and speech patterns is important when trying to type up transcripts. Apart from this process, we also created a display to exhibit at the Building Better Communities (BBC) Fellows showcase event, turned in our project portfolios as the final assignment for the course, and participated in making a short documentary video, *So our Histories Do not Die*, about the experience. My contribution to the documentary involved being interviewed about my thoughts on the project.

Hearing my teammates reflect on their experience helped me see how much I really did gain from this project as well.

Reflection

While I know I gained academically and experientially from this pursuit, I cannot deny that it was quite demanding and exhausting. One of the greatest challenges I encountered was balancing the course's required workload and demand for time with that of my other five classes. First, the assigned readings and questions previously mentioned usually took hours to complete per assignment, varying in length from as short as forty-eight pages to as long as seventy-eight pages. Having two of these assignments per week along with readings and writings from my other classes challenged me greatly and called for sacrifices. On the other hand, learning to deal with difficult situations is a skill I will have to utilize in almost everything I do. Therefore, knowing where my strength comes from, what to do, and that I can overcome in difficult situations may have a positive impact on my future. Next, being required to complete such large tasks like the interviews and transcriptions without having much time to practice the skills used in either process also proved to be daunting and unsettling at times. Dr. Doyle often mentioned that an oral historian may conduct as many as four interviews before he or she truly gets the hang of the process. Our team only had time for one ten-minute interview each and a critiquing session before our interviews began. Moreover, there was only enough room in the schedule for a few learning sessions before we started filming. Our last class meeting before the allotted interview period was March 12 and I taped my first official interview on March 23. The rest of my interviews, both the two where I was the interviewee and the remaining one where I was the videographer, occurred on the

Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday of that week. Although it was exacting and made me anxious, I learned that, as was pointed out in class, nervousness can be good. It means that one cares about what he or she is doing enough to worry about messing it up. This project also showed that good things can come out of apprehension. After all, I was very nervous before conducting my first interview, but I felt I did a better job as the interviewer in this one than in my second one. Finally, the hardships of the oral history project forced me to work under circumstances that I will most likely encounter at various times throughout my work experience and life in general. Unforeseen circumstances played a large part in some of the time constraints we found ourselves under, yet unpredicted events uproot ideals and plans in various circumstances throughout life, whether one likes it or not. Flexibility, agility, and adaptability are beneficial and perhaps even essential as I enter a society that exists under a fluctuating economy, includes a workforce that can be realistically unstable, and offers wages and income that can change.

On the other hand, I honed a variety of skills and gained so much from this experience. For one, I got to explore myself as an interviewer, a role where my inquisitiveness could be appreciated and encouraged. Curiosity is not a favorable trait in every circumstance, but as an interviewer, sometimes asking about small details encourages the interviewee to further inspect their memories and ideally paint a clearer picture for the listeners. Second, being a part of a process where critical listening and responsive questions are essential allowed me to work on my communication skills. It is easy for me to overlook small hints in the communication process because I have social interactions every day, however listening is so important, especially in fields like

teaching. One may learn quite a bit about other people by what they verbally say and do not say, whether it be by body language or subtle clues in their speech. Additionally, I found myself applying concepts from oral history into my regular conversations, asking follow-up questions based on what the other person said. After all, interviewers should be able to catch small mentions and hints, because expounding upon these may lead to great stories.

In the end, the African American Alumni Oral History project has been an exhausting, demanding, necessary, and unique undertaking of which I am blessed to have been a part. Not only did it introduce me to new skills, but it allowed me to pursue an established passion of mine, African American history, in an exclusive way. In the ten-minute interview for the documentary, I mentioned that this was both a burden and an honor. It was an honor that Mr. Hall and Mrs. Joiner trusted me enough to let me peak into their lives and introduce their stories to the whole world potentially. Dr. Doyle told us that as oral historians we interview and ask questions on behalf of posterity, because the stories that we do not capture on camera may fade away as time progresses, if not otherwise documented. In this way, I was anxious to do justice to my interviewees' stories because those are, according to what we learned, what will remain. I also mentioned that students learn about people such as Rosa Parks and the Martin Luther King, Jr. and, while these great figures are very important, we do not always learn about the Jenell Joiners and Henry Halls whose experiences are just as valid. The civil rights movement would not have been as successful without the contributions, successes, bruises, and even deaths of a myriad of people, and they all had or still have stories to tell from unique perspectives. This experience has reintroduced me to the idea that there are

thousands, perhaps millions, of unheard stories that could greatly increase our understanding of history, and I am intrigued.

In taking on the role of oral historian, I have had the pleasure of hearing and learning about fascinating people and the honor of helping introduce them to a large audience or platform. I hope that through helping preserve these stories, I have also helped preserve a piece of the past, as we presently make our own history here at Ball State.

¹ Anthony O. Edmonds and E. Bruce Geelhoed, *Ball State University: An Interpretive History*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001.

² Lassiter, Luke, Hurley Goodall, Elizabeth Campbell, and Michelle Johnson, eds. *The Other Side of Middletown: Exploring Muncie's African American Community*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 2004.

³ *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross*. Gates, Jr., Henry, Peter Kunhardt, Dyllan McGee, Julie Anderson, Rachel Dretzin, and Leslie Gladsjo. PBS. 2013. Television.

⁴ Lassiter, Luke, Hurley Goodall, Elizabeth Campbell, and Michelle Johnson, eds. *The Other Side of Middletown: Exploring Muncie's African American Community*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 2004. Print.

⁵ Valerie R. Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists* 2nd ed.; Walnut Creek, Cal.: AltaMira Press, 2005.

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**THE
PRE-INTERVIEW
PHASE**

Dear Mr. Allen Williams,

On behalf of the members involved in the African American Oral History Project, we are writing to ask for your assistance on the next phase of the project. With your network of members in the Ball State University Black Alumni Constituent Society, we would appreciate it if you could give us a list of about 30 people that we could contact in order to arrange the history interviews.

For each prospective interviewee, we would need the following information: their name, email address, phone number, year of BSU graduation, any majors and/or minors they earned, and the specific type of degree they received. We plan on contacting each person within the next couple of weeks to determine their availability for interviews.

Once again, we appreciate your support and interest in this project. Please let us know if you have any additional questions. Thank you so much.

Kristal All, Rishad Readus, and Charelle Brown
Communications and Project Management
Ball State University African American Alumni Oral History Project

**THE
INTERVIEW
PHASE**

**THE
POST-INTERVIEW
PHASE**

Archives and Special Collections

University Libraries



Ball State University
Bracken Library, Room 210
Muncie, IN 47304

Phone: 765-285-5078
FAX: 765-285-8149
Email: libarchives@bsu.edu

Ball State University African-American Alumni Oral History Project

Archival Identification:

Interviewer(s): Charelle Brown

Interviewee(s): Henry Hall

Date of interview: March 25, 2015

Brown: Hello. My name is Charelle Brown. Today's date is March 25, 2015. And I am interviewing Mr. Henry Hall as a part of the African American Alumni Oral History Project. Let's begin. When were you born?

Hall: June 14, 1970.

Brown: And, where were you born?

Hall: Fort Wayne, Indiana

Brown: Did you grow up there? Did you remain there throughout your childhood?

Hall: I was born and raised there, yes.

Brown: And what was your neighborhood like?

Hall: I grew up in subsidized housing, apartment buildings, a long strip with apartment buildings on either side of the road. The good part, there's a park across the street. And Fort Wayne has some of the best parks in the country – let alone in Indiana—and so we always had plenty to do.

Brown: Can you explain what the apartment building that you grew up in looked like?

[1:00]

Hall: Brick on the bottom, white siding on top, black shingles.

Brown: And can you tell me about your parents?

Hall: Father born and raised in Alabama. Left, went to the military. Forged his name and birth certificate so he could sign up early. Served in World War II and Korea. Got out. Moved to Fort Wayne to work at International Harvester, met my wife. Had four children, me included.

My mom born and raised in Brentwood, Alabama, which is now called Adger. Left town, went to New York, became a domestic employee. She worked for Dick Van Dyke to help him and his wife raise their, I think, three or four children. Left there, went to Indiana. Met my dad, got married, had four kids.

[2:00]

They divorced when I was five, so I was pretty much raised by my mom. Dad was always there yelling about education, but my mom was the mainstay.

Brown: Okay. Did – So you said your father went to the military.

Hall: Um-hm.

Brown: Did either of your parents go to college?

Hall: No. My father actually applied for entrance into the University of Alabama and was denied, primarily because he was black.

Brown: And were there any specific lessons or values that was emphasized in your household?

Hall: Trust God. And get a good, solid education. Those were the two primary themes running in our house.

[3:00]

Brown: And you mentioned your parents divorced when you were five?

Hall: Yes.

Brown: Did your father live in Fort Wayne?

Hall: Yes.

Brown: Was he closer to you all, as far as where he lived?

Hall: No, probably fifteen miles away.

Brown: Okay. And you had three siblings?

Hall: My father had four children, but my mom had two prior to marrying my father, so I had five. There are six of us total.

Brown: And you all lived in one house when you were younger?

Hall: Yes.

Brown: And in an apartment?

Hall: Yes.

Brown: How was that?

Hall: Full. (both laugh) Crowded, and all the things that come along with having a large family. Plenty to do. Growing up in a house with six other people, it is difficult. At times there's no privacy, so sometimes you leave home to get privacy.

[4:00]

We always had plenty to eat. Always had plenty to do. Now like I said before, we grew up across the street from a park. Always had other kids to play with so that was not an issue. But, while you were contained in those four walls in the house, it was a bit crowded. So we spent most of our time watching TV and reading, like most kids. In that day and age, there was no Xbox. When I was a child (laughs), the best we had was Atari. So—

Brown: And what is Atari?

Hall: It's another form of videogame. And it resembled a couple shaded corners and a ball, so to speak, that went all across the screen. So you moved your paddle to make it hit it across. So it was not the excitement that the kids see and all the videogames that you can play on Xbox or even on your phone.

[5:00]

Brown: Could you all play it at the same time?

Hall: Two people—that was it. There was no gaming with your cousin who's in another state or your friend who's across town. There was none of that.

Brown: And where are you in the birth order of your siblings?

Hall: Stuck with my brother in the middle. I'm number four.

Brown: And how is your relationship with them?

Hall: My family is fine. We fought a lot when I was younger. My mother used to say we fought like cats and dogs. And we did. There were even times where we, somewhere along the line, we somehow divided up teams. And it was three-on-three most of the time, or two-on-two, or one-on-one. But, it was usually—there was a natural, I wouldn't say natural, but there was a divide between us.

[6:00]

And we pretty much stuck to that, and to this day we pretty much stick to that. So if there's an argument, there are three on one side, three on the other.

Brown: And you mentioned that your mother had two—

Hall: Yes.

Brown: —children? Did you all live with your mother—?

Hall: Yes.

Brown: Okay. Have any of your siblings gone on to college?

Hall: Yes. The one directly under me. He actually went to Ball State.

Brown: But the ones who were older than you—weren't?

Hall: No college. And my youngest, no college. The one who shares the middle with me, he actually went to the Marine Core and Navy, and he retired from the Navy.

Brown: Okay. So you were the first one in your family to go to college?

Hall: In my immediate family—

Brown: Um-hm.

Hall: —yes.

[7:00]

I was not the first in my whole family to go to college—just in my immediate family.

Brown: Okay. And how many girls and boys were there among you and your siblings?

Hall: Five boys, one girl.

Brown: (inaudible??)

Hall: Girl was lucky. She was number two and not number six. (both laugh)

Brown: Okay. So let's move on to when you went to high school. Where did you go to high school?

Hall: I went to Wayne high school in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Brown: And are you and your brother closest to where—or your sibling above you—where they

were in the school at the same time as you?

Hall: There were three of us in high school at the same time.

Brown: Did that affect your experience in any way?

Hall: Hardly ever saw them. All different grades, so we were all over the place.

Brown: And how big was your high school?

Hall: Wayne high school was about, I'd say, fifteen to two thousand, fifteen hundred to two thousand students.

[8:00]

Brown: And can you describe it, like, the student bodies, the teachers?

Hall: 5 percent black—that's all I remember, it was 5 percent black. Most of my classes, I was the only person of color in my classes. Most of my classes were honors. Not a lot of people signing up for those period, forget color. The classes were pretty thin (laughs), usually ten to twelve people in a class. The other makeup of the school—most kids who attended that school were bussed in some shape or form. There were very few neighborhoods around the school, so I wouldn't consider it a neighborhood school. It was built on the outskirts of Fort Wayne, so when it was originally built, it probably would've been considered in the county, not even in the city.

Brown: How far did you live away from your school?

Hall: Ten miles.

Brown: So about how long did it take you to get to school?

[9:00]

Hall: Well, with all the stops that it made, about forty-five minutes.

Brown: Did you ride the bus?

Hall: I did.

Brown: And being only 5 percent black, how would you say that shaped your experience there?

Hall: —I learned to fend for myself pretty well, pretty early in life, even before I made it to high school. I understood that I could count on very few people. So I fended for myself a lot. It helped—my sophomore year—it helped that we actually got a black principal. And we had other people in the school who looked out for those kids who they felt were on the right track and who could go to college and who could go on to do other things and greater things.

[10:00]

So I was fortunate that I had some adults looking after me. Probably better than most kids there, regardless of color. So from that standpoint, I think it was okay. Probably better than okay.

Brown: And you said you had to fend for yourself. Can you give an example?

Hall: In most settings in school, teachers or professors kind of tend to speak to one class of people—well, and when I mean class, socioeconomic type of student. And they didn't always or weren't always able to relate that to every student in the classroom. So I would always ask defining questions. So, "You said that. What do you mean by this" or "What do you mean by that?" (??)

[11:00]

So that I basically made myself almost like you are, an interviewer. So when I really wanted to know something, I asked a lot of questions so that I would ask the teacher to further define what they were teaching and how they were teaching and how it related to me as a student, as a person in the community—all those things. So a lot of teachers didn't like to (laughs) see me coming and I was unapologetic about it. I'm still that way to this day because I want to make sure I understand what people are asking me. I want to make sure I answer the question that they're really asking. A lot of people beat around the bush. I don't really do that. Most of the people who would tell you, who know me as an individual, would kind of characterize me as maybe a straight shooter—

[12:00]

A don't-ask-him-a-question-if-you-don't-want-to-know-the-truth kind of guy. So I would think that my experience with whether it's a teacher, educator, trainer, superior—whatever—I'm very forward. I don't take a lot of crap. (laughs) And have always kind of been that way. Growing up in that environment, with that many people around, you learn to defend yourself if nothing else. Does that answer your question?

Brown: Yes.

Hall: All right.

Brown: And you also mentioned that there were adults who could see potential in their students. Were those the teachers or administrators in the school?

Hall: There were some administrators. There was one particular teacher who stuck out.

[13:00]

She happened to be a military wife, she happened to be white. And I remember she taught honors

English. And her husband happened to be in the military, and most of the gentlemen or men under his command happened to be black. And I remember her telling me this story. She held me after class one day and she basically said, "If there's a hard question that nobody wants to answer, I'm asking you." You know, I'm a young kid __and_ (??) I'm like, Wow. This woman is tripping. But she basically said, "You're going to have to be better, if you want to get ahead, you're going to have to be better than you white counterparts." She said, "The world is cruel. Racism still exists. So if you really want to have a good job, you really want to move forward in life, then you're going to have to be better." And she held true to her word. Every time there was a question no one wanted to answer, she'd call on me. But I understood it. There're a lot of conversations people have to have with their children. Some of them aren't the same conversations. Black parents oftentimes have different conversations with their children about race and about progress and about biased—I know that's a term we use now. We don't really say racism, we say "biased" or we say preference. Call it what you want. I tend to call it whatever context I'm operating in.

Brown: And you said that the—again going back to the your school was 5 percent black—what was the teachers like? What was the population of teachers like?

Hall: Less than 5 percent black. (They laugh)

Brown: Had you ever had an African American teacher?

[15:00]

Hall: Gym—that's it.

Brown: Okay—

Hall: In high school, gym. In elementary school, I had a teacher who was of African descent, she was black. That's about it.

Brown: Okay. And, also, you mentioned that black parents have to have different conversations with their children? Can you clarify that or explain that further?

Hall: We'd be here a lot longer than two hours. —We often had conversations that went something like, if I had a white friend or whatever, I'd come home excited, me telling my mom that Billy and I are really good friends and we're "bestest" friends and we really had a lot of fun today at school and talking about what best friends do.

[16:00]

She says, "Well, Billy's been over here several times. Why haven't Billy's parents invited you to their house?" —Kind of makes you think. And so you have the conversation, you go back to Billy—"Why have you never invited me to your house?" "Well—where you live, my mom's not that cool, she thinks people over here are bad people." __She said __ (??) "Yeah, but you come over." "Well, I don't tell my mom when I come over." (laughs) And so you learn to have

conversations like that, and I think most of them are done in an effort to protect you as a child so you understand the dynamics of relationships that aren't as easily seen, they're not visible if you don't ask more questions.

[17:00]

And so what our parents tried to do was put everything in the proper context, in the proper time, so that we understood why people did what they did. Different people have different motivations, and usually you find out what those are if you sit and listen to them long enough. If you keep your mouth shut long enough, most people reveal their intentions or their motives, whether it's being a friend or anything else, assisting you in some way. Most people usually reveal their motives. So we learned to listen. We learned to catch those subtle hints. But most of it was those conversations you'd have with your parents about the world around you, and it wasn't always rosy and it wasn't always what it seemed to be or appeared to be.

[18:00]

Just conversations about friendship, conversations about education. We had a lot of conversations about education. I remember in middle school they put in the basic classes—not very trying is probably a better way to describe them. And I can remember my mom calling the school. She's like, "My son's bored." And this was before the idea of ADHD [Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder] or ADHD, and the teachers would complain that I don't pay attention in class, I'm losing interest, and they were right—but for different reason. They were right because I was bored out of my mind, not because I didn't get (laughs) what they were teaching. Because I got good grades, and they couldn't dispute that. What they never caught on until probably the end of my middle school time is that I was just bored.

[19:00]

I never did homework in middle school. I didn't have to. Everything they said in class I just got—it just stuck. But the cat was out of the bag when I went to high school. My mom had befriended some folks at the high school, and they were like, "Oh that won't happen here." And so I was in honors this, honors that. So all that meant was I had to do my homework on the bus. I still hardly ever did homework at home. I'm blessed in that way. There're a lot of things I just get. So education really has never been difficult for me. At least not in the things I like.

Brown: Okay. And, I'd like to also go back to—you mentioned one of your teachers gave you advice that you have to be better.

[20:00]

Did you realize that at the time, or did you think that advice was valuable at that time?

Hall: Yeah. It wasn't the first time I had heard it. I'd heard it from my parents too. I understood that going in. I was actually probably more shocked that she had the gumption to tell me to my face. And for me, that made it made it more real because it was like she was confirming

something, you know, I had heard from my parents time and time again. But she was actually confirming that, Hey yeah. That's true. You need to watch out for that. So yeah, it helped. I was a little moved by it. I mean, she was one of the people that I credit for propelling me forward because it was just that understanding that, Whoa. This is not a myth. So yeah. I would say so that she played a big part in it.

[21:00]

Brown: And had you experienced that you had to be better in your high school or your school career?

Hall: I wouldn't say I found areas where, Aha!—those Aha moments—I knew this was that. No. Did I always question why maybe someone else got an award or why I wasn't chosen or Geez, it seems like if I stack things up side-by-side, it looks like I win but somehow that person got it? Absolutely. Multiple times. But I didn't go to school to get certificates or get pieces of paper or anything like that. At least that's what I kept telling myself. If it happens enough, some of those things kind of die to you and they become unimportant. So I had gotten past that point. They bother you, but you just keep moving. You just don't dwell on it.

[22:00]

If you dwell on it, it takes too much of your energy.

Brown: Hmm. Okay. And what year did you graduate—

Hall: (both talking at once) High school? 1988.

Brown: And can you describe your group of friend in high school?

Hall: —I just revisited this for somebody else—had a couple guys, all of them were from the neighborhood. Had a guy who grew up in a middle-income—our housing project was located smack-dab in the middle of a middle- (laughs) income neighborhood. Had a friend, a black friend, who lived in that neighborhood outside of the housing projects. He was a very good friend, kind of on the same track educationally. Then I had some friends who were just what they would refer to today as “ride or die.”

[23:00]

I had some friends who said, You know what? Out of this group of people, you're the one who can make it out. So anything I ever needed or ever wanted, all I had to do was ask them and they'd find a way to get it. So you have those friends growing up that you know beyond a shadow of a doubt, if there is a scuffle or there's a situation where you need help, I had a close group of friends that would come to my aid. I was a big guy, so I didn't need a lot of help fighting, but if there was anything else, yeah. I had a small—I'd probably say three or four good friends who I could go to and talk to them about anything that was going on.

Brown: And did those friends attend school with you?

Hall: No. None of them ended up going to college.

Brown: Did they attend your high school with you?

Hall: Yes.

[24:00]

Brown: But were they in your classes?

Hall: Two were, the other two were not. They were a year older.

Brown: And were you involved in any extracurricular activities?

Hall: Through parks and rec [parks and recreation], I played tennis and, pretty much, football. Those were my two mainstays. I did track, but those three really.

Brown: Okay. You mentioned that your dad put an emphasis on education?

Hall: Um-hm.

Brown: How would he do that?

Hall: Whenever we would get together, he'd just always talk about college. He'd always talk about, Make sure that when you're teachers are teaching you, you understand what they're saying. If you don't understand them, ask questions. Don't be afraid to go ask for help if you're ever struggling with anything.

[25:00]

And my dad kind of, to some degree, set the example. He always was reading—always. He always had a book. It could be a matchbook, and he'd turn it over and start reading where it was manufactured, who manufactured it, what country it was manufactured in—all those things. He just always read. So reading is something I actually don't like to do, but I do it because it's necessary. But that's probably more of the influence I got from my dad. He always said it was a gateway to get from where I was at to the place I'd like to be. Most people tend to equate those things with having more money or having more things. With me, it was no different. I wanted more money, wanted more things.

Brown: Okay. And, so was it expected that you go to college or—?

Hall: I think from my dad's point of view, yes.

[26:00]

My mom really just wanted us to not falter while we were under her care. Stay out of jail, stay out of trouble, try not to have any babies, all those good things that I think most mothers want. And I think that was her basic desires, that we make it through high school without faltering on any one of those things. It wasn't necessarily, Go to college, go to college. That was more of my dad. And I think that was more him because he was, in his mind, denied the opportunity to go. So when he wanted to get educated, again, as I said, he applied for the University of Alabama, was denied. And who knows why they denied him. His belief always was that he was an African American. This was before the first three African Americans were admitted into the University of Alabama, so he always assumed it was that.

[27:00]

So in order to get his training, that's why he enlisted in the military. He said, "They would at least train me. I'd at least leave there with a skill, a trade, or something of that nature."

Brown: So he pushed you to go to school.

Hall: I would say he pushed all of us, it wasn't just me. He pushed all of us to go.

Brown: And did your mom work while you all were—

Hall: Oh yeah.

Brown: —kids?

Hall: Yeah. She was a CNA [Certified Nurse's Aide], which is nothing more than a nurse who can dispense medicine. —Not a nurse. Something short of a nurse, but somebody who could dispense medicine. But we saw her too. I mean, we saw her work very hard. My mom was a person who, after having her children, she tried to go to school. Was in nursing school and really couldn't finish because her eyes failed on her. She just couldn't stay up and read for lengths of time.

[28:00]

So she was content or ended up being content with staying in that job as a nurse's aide.

Brown: Okay. Let's transition to once you graduated from high school. But, before we do transition into your Ball State years, there was a 1987 issue of *Playboy*—so when you were still in high school—that ranked Ball State as number eighteen on a list of top forty party schools in the US [United States]. Had you heard about this?

Hall: No.

Brown: Had you—

Hall: Ball State wasn't even on my radar. And prior to 1987, I had heard of Ball State, but it was a teacher's college and that's—

[29:00]

A lot of teachers at my high school graduated from Ball State so it wasn't that I hadn't heard of it, but a party school or anything other than teaching was not really talked about because, of course, my only interaction were teachers who had come to Ball State to receive an education, not anything else. And I wasn't that interested in teaching. (laughs) Teachers didn't make a lot of money, so I wasn't (laughs) that interested in teaching. (both laugh) So the fact that Ball State was ranked as a party school was completely unknown to me, and it's not why I was coming. I was bent on getting an education that would someday help me make a lot of money. I mean, I wish I had more substance than that to give you. I don't. And people who've worked with me in the past would tell you, As long as he got more money, he didn't care what title you gave him. You gave him more responsibility, you put more money in his check, he was good. That's kind of who you're talking to.

[30:00]

It's not that I don't enjoy life, but growing up without much—and the way we always characterize it is we had more month than money—I wanted to be on the other end. I always wanted to have an abundance of money—I didn't want it to run out. I didn't want to have to go to McDonald's when I really wanted something better than McDonald's. No, I really didn't care about partying. (laughs)

Brown: Did you apply to any other schools besides Ball State?

Hall: No. I did not. I was a student athlete at Wayne High School and I just assumed I would be a student athlete in college, and if I hadn't received a scholarship here to play football, I probably would've ended up at IU [Indiana University Bloomington] on the Groups program. Or I would've got in the military and then gone to school in military, and then probably became an officer in the military.

[31:00]

So I had two tracks. I was going to fall on one of those. I had already had a brother in the Marines who was loving life and doing extremely well. I was just going to follow his footsteps and we would've just done the whole college thing together, we would've done the whole military thing together. So I was either going to go down that path, or I was going to go to school and (??) get an education and play a sport. I didn't even really give it much thought. I had an opportunity—I could've taken some academic scholarships, I had those offers too. So it wasn't a situation where I worried about applying for school because I knew with my grades and my test scores, I could get in pretty much anywhere I applied. So I wasn't really worried about going to school. But I could've went to Dartmouth, Drake—people still ask me why didn't I go to Dartmouth—but Dartmouth, Drake, (inaudible?? And in) Wabash, other schools like that.

[32:00]

I knew I was going, so I didn't worry about it.

Brown: And are those all Indiana schools?

Hall: Drake is in Iowa, Dartmouth is on the east coast.

Brown: And you mentioned a Groups program at IU?

Hall: Yeah. It's basically for kids whose family have a certain income or not income, if you know what I mean. They provide scholarships, and you basically go down (inaudible??) as a group—no pun intended. But there's a group of students from Fort Wayne who go every year, and essentially, if you have the grades and the commitment to being a good student—which I had both of those—and they afford you the opportunity to go to school. And I think most of those kids actually don't, other than the financial aid they would get, I don't think they take out student loans. I think it's pretty much—free.

[33:00]

Again, going to college really wasn't an afterthought. It was just something I assumed I would do. Whether I did it in the military or outside of it, I assumed was going.

Brown: And did Ball State offer you a scholarship?

Hall: Yes. They offered me a full athletic scholarship.

Brown: And what did that include?

Hall: Everything. So room and board, meals, tuition. I think what we had to pay was a three hundred dollar—at that time, I'm not even sure it was three hundred dollars—an application fee to the university. I think that was it. The one thing they don't tell you when they give you a full ride is that, a person in my case—I was still broke. (laughs) So I could go to school for free, but I couldn't eat pizza on Friday night outside of the dorm, so you ate what the dorm had to offer. — It was all right.

[34:00]

There's worse.

Brown: Was it a football scholarship?

Hall: Um-hm.

Brown: So you played for Ball State—

Hall: I did.

Brown: —when you were here?

Hall: I did. Yes.

Brown: How would you say that affected your experience here?

Hall: I would say we probably got treated better than the average student. You usually got in free at parties when you did go. There wasn't much preference in the classroom though. I think students, at least given that period of time, especially for a school like Ball State that prides itself on education, I think the professors probably made it more difficult for athletes than they had to. I watched a lot of my teammates struggle trying to be a student athlete. I don't know how basketball players did it.

[35:00]

But football was easy enough. It was once a week. We rarely missed class if we were in football. We may've had to miss a Friday. I solved that by trying to have as few Friday classes as possible. Again, I didn't really struggle in the classroom as some others might have. But it was all right. All-in-all, I think they gave you an opportunity to get your work done. They gave you an opportunity to have a tutor if you needed it. That's about all I have to say about that.

Brown: So as far as classes go, you said earlier that you really didn't have a problem with classes. Was that the same when you got to Ball State?

Hall: Yes. I didn't have a problem. I argued a lot with my English professor.

[36:00]

Grammar is one of those things that they like things in a certain way. I had read enough poetry, I had read enough other things that I also knew that some people took the idea of grammar and they stretched it and bent it and contorted it to work for them, and they were celebrated for it. I can remember getting a C on a paper one time, and I wasn't the nicest person when I got the C. And I went to the teacher and I asked why I got a C, and they started talking about grammar and writing and this and that. And I said, "You know what? I'm not going to let this go."

[37:00]

And so I went to the teacher's—who I don't even remember the process now—but I went to the person above the teacher and I said, "You read my paper. You tell me what's wrong with my paper." They didn't like it. I went to another person and said, "You read my paper. Tell me what's wrong with my paper." And I was essentially hell-bent on, there's nothing wrong with that paper. My paper deserves an A. They ended up giving me a B, but it was an A paper. Just because I didn't write the way you wanted me to write—there was nothing literally wrong with my paper. Grammatically it was correct. She just didn't like what I said.

As you probably get the tone now, I really don't necessarily care what other people think of me, but my work? When you question my work, I got a problem with that. Because I do good work. (both laugh)

Brown: Okay. And what was your major here?

Hall: Business—it was Finance really.

[38:00]

It started off as Accounting, but I realized I couldn't play football, party, and be an accounting major. So I switched to Finance and it worked out. Accounting, you just had labs and audits and—I was probably my audit classes short of Accounting. I didn't want to work that hard. It would've actually required me to study. (both laugh) And it wasn't that I was out partying in the literal sense that your "top forty" thing was. My idea of partying was doing whatever I wanted to do with my free time because I didn't have that much of it. You were at football six hours a day, so there was not a lot of free time outside of that.

[39:00]

But if I wanted to just veg out in front of the TV and watch somebody else work hard on the football field, I wanted to watch football or whatever, or hang out with my friends in the dorm—and I kind of wanted to experience the normal college life like most students. So to that end, after my freshman year, I didn't room with athletes very much. Maybe one or two. But it was never in a setting where it was just he and I because I didn't want to be talking about football all day, every day—or basketball or baseball.

Brown: Did you know any other students from Fort Wayne who got the same scholarship that you got?

Hall: At Ball State, no. No, not as a freshman. There were a couple kids ahead of me from Fort Wayne that I knew, and one or two behind me that I knew who got scholarships here at Ball State to play football.

[40:00]

Brown: Okay. So you mentioned that you didn't really know much about Ball State before you came. What was your initial reaction of the school?

Hall: I can't say I had a big reaction. I didn't have any expectations of the school when I got here. So there was no letdown or uplift when I got here. It was just buildings. It was kind of like you see on TV, like California schools where they have a campus. That's all it looked like to me. It's just now I get to walk from class to class. It's not down the hallway, it's out this building into the next. I didn't have any expectation, so it didn't bother me at all because, again, I was going to take it for what it was.

[41:00]

If I needed to walk out of this building into another one, that's what I did. I didn't have a car anyway so it wasn't like I was worried about driving or gas. It's just, this is where the class is. Okay, I'm going.

Brown: And how far away is Ball State from Fort Wayne?

Hall: Door-to-door, ninety minutes.

Brown: How was it with your family, being away from your family, and being away from your mom and—?

Hall: Didn't bother me one bit.

Brown: Did it bother her or—?

Hall: I think it bothered my mom a little bit. I was kind of like the enforcer at home, made people do what they were supposed to do, but beyond that—I still had two younger siblings at home—she had plenty to do.

Brown: Did you ever talk about college with your younger siblings?

[42:00]

Hall: Not really. Again, it was just kind of expected that we go. At least that's what I thought. My younger brother came to Ball State. I think his degree is in Business Administration. My youngest brother was just gifted in auto body and paint. That was his passion, so he didn't need a college degree to do that and get paid a lot of money. So that's what he did. College, for him, really wouldn't've been that beneficial. He had two people he could already ask advice from.

Brown: Okay. And did you have a minor here?

Hall: No. I graduated with a degree in Finance. I'm probably three classes away from an Accounting degree, so no. I didn't have a minor.

[43:00]

I think the way I say it on my resume is I graduated with Finance with a concentration in Accounting or something like that. The Finance degree here was a little more diverse. I think back then it was really Finance and Investments and Insurance. It was kind of all three rolled up into one, and then Accounting. So, no. I didn't. No minor.

Brown: And what led you to that major?

Hall: I wanted to understand money—that's it. And I was hell-bent on not being poor. I wish it was more to the story than that (both laugh) but no. I knew what it was like not to have a lot of money.

Brown: Okay.

Hall: I'll give you a little more information than that. I knew one day I wanted to own my own business. I knew that I wanted to understand how the world works.

[44:00]

To complete our Finance major, I think we had to take some Economics classes. Money and Banking might've been one of the courses that I ended up taking. But I just really wanted to understand business and how it worked, wanted to understand the accounting of it. So I would make sure how to do it and how not to do it. I would make sure that people couldn't steal from me kind of thing. So anything that was centered around business, I wanted to learn it because when you look around as a youngster, you always see, Well, this guy's a business owner and he's got a lot of money, and he's got nice cars, and he's got a nice house. And this guy works for him and his stuff isn't as nice. And then you just kind of do that enough, and you look around the room and most of the guys who were considered to be successful owned their own business.

[45:00]

So it was something I always knew that I wanted to do, and I wanted to learn as much as possible about how it worked.

Brown: And growing up, did you have any examples of business owners that—

Hall: Yeah, absolutely.

Brown: —you wanted to follow?

Hall: I participated in the program Big Brothers Big Sisters. My "Big," who me and my younger brother shared, started a business, and we kind of got to follow him around and do some of the "grunt work" for him. But you got to see how that worked. And my dad ran a heating and air conditioning business. That's what he did. He was a heating and air conditioning contractor. So I would follow him around, do a lot of the work for him, and it was interesting. I remember this one time we went over—excuse me—we went over this lady's house, and her compressor on her refrigerator was just rattling. It's a noise that might bother anybody.

[46:00]

And so my father says, "Well, we'll take a look at it." And what that really meant was, My son was going to unscrew it and try and figure out what the problem was. And so we did that. I remember we took a nickel and we drilled a hole in the nickel because the only problem was that it wasn't tight. We drilled a hole in the nickel, we used it as a washer, tightened it back up, and

we said, Ma'am that'll be sixty-five dollars. We were there all of fifteen minutes. And my dad gave me five dollars for that trip. And I said, "Well, why do I only get five dollars?" He said, "You just turned a wrench. I actually knew what to do." —There's the lesson. So for me multiple lessons like that and then following my "big brothers" around, watching him interact with employees, with vendors. And on the sales side, for me it was almost like a natural fit.

[47:00]

I knew that I could get what I wanted going that route.

Brown: And just to clarify, Big Brothers Big Sisters is a mentoring program?

Hall: Yes. Yes, they match mentors up with young kids. I actually had what is a group match. It wasn't just me, a one-on-one match. It was several kids that were matched with him. So he had probably three other kids besides us. Gentleman who never had any kids of his own, and just kind of wanted to give back. And whether it was going to the mall, going to Pizza Hut, or just hanging out—he also gave us opportunities to earn money. We could rake leaves, wash cars, shovel snow. So it was very beneficial for me. Still close to him today.

[48:00]

Brown: And when you were pursuing this degree, did you ever go back to him and ask him questions?

Hall: Absolutely. I'll tell you this story, it was kind of funny. I mentioned that having a scholarship doesn't necessarily mean you have money in your pocket. Well, I had got to the point where I was tired of not having money in my pocket. And I can remember, I met with a Marine recruiter, signed up, took the ASVAB [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery] test. And again, my brother's in the Marines, so I have somebody to talk to. And the recruiter (laughs) called my coach, says, "You'll hold Henry's scholarship for the next six months." And the coach said, "Well, what are you talking about?" "Well, Henry's going to enlist." He said, "He's one of our better candidates for OCS and when he enrolls, you're going to hold his scholarship for him." And really all that was was an effort—

[49:00]

I was tired of not having any money. The fact that I was going to school for free didn't matter as much because I still didn't have anything yet. There was still nothing tangible to that experience yet. And I can remember he called me. He says, "Don't do this." I said, "What do you mean?" I said, "It's not like I'm not going to finish." He said, "Yeah, but you're almost done now." And I said, "Man, I've been here three years. I got two more years before I finish. I'm tired of being broke." They convinced me, between my mom and him, they convinced me to stay in school and finish. Because I was going to come back, but it would've been after I'd went to boot camp and all those other things, and I'd been part of ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] here, as well as playing football. Somehow they found me a good summer job where I could have enough money to last me all school year.

[50:00]

(laughs)

Brown: And just to go back and clarify, you said OCS?

Hall: Officers Candidate School.

Brown: Okay. So you did work while you were in school?

Hall: Um-hm. Only in the summers. If you're a D-one [Division One] scholarship recipient, you are not allowed to work during the school year—something they should change. Because there are enough of Henry Halls out there who get a scholarship and still don't have any money, that are essentially going to school for free, but they don't have money for anything else.

Brown: So if you had been given the opportunity to work during school, do you think you would have?

Hall: Absolutely. I could've did the same thing half the students at Ball State who earn money do. I could've sat in the rec [Recreation] hall and passed out pool balls, ping pong paddles. I could do that. What's difficult about that? And could've been studying at the same time. That's what they did. (laughs) Absolutely. Yes.

[51:00]

Brown: And you mentioned your mom convinced you to stay?

Hall: Um-hm.

Brown: Did she not want you to enlist?

Hall: No.

Brown: Why was that?

Hall: She just had this thing about us going off into some foreign country, getting killed. So she just didn't like the idea of the military. It's not that she was against the military. She just didn't want her boys to have to (laughs) die. That's all.

Brown: And speaking of military, when you were here, there were students protesting the Persian Gulf War. Were you aware of that?

Hall: Yeah, my brother was in it. So yeah, I was aware of it, but most of the time when they would say something to me, I said, "Man, well my brother's over there. You're not going to really get my support. I'm more worried about him coming home than am about protesting the

war.”

Brown: So you didn't really participate in the protests.

Hall: Not at all.

[52:00]

Brown: But were you, like, not in favor of the protests, or—?

Hall: I didn't know enough about the war to be in favor of it or against it.

Brown: Okay. And how did that affect you here, having your brother in the war?

Hall: I was concerned about my brother's well-being. Yeah, I mean, I think any relative would be.

Brown: Okay. And besides football, were you in any extracurricular activities?

Hall: Ball State, no.

Brown: But other—

Hall: Track. I did track a couple years.

Brown: Okay. And on campus where did you live?

Hall: I stayed in Studebaker, before the whole boy, girl, boy, girl floor deal. It was half one side—every floor was girls and the other side was boys.

[53:00]

And then I think I stayed in LaFollette. Those were the only places I stayed here on campus. Just those two dorms.

Brown: And you mentioned that after your first year, you didn't want to room—

Hall: I didn't room with an athlete, no.

Brown: Okay.

Hall: I didn't want to be talking about football all the time. That wasn't the sum total of me, so I didn't want it to become all about football.

Brown: Okay. And did you come here with any of your friends from back home? Because you mentioned back in high school, you had friends in your school that were from your

neighborhood. When you came to Ball State, did you have friends come with you?

Hall: No, none of them came to Ball State.

Brown: Did you know anyone here when you came?

Hall: I knew the former players from Fort Wayne who had gotten scholarships here. I knew them.

[54:00]

And a couple students from my high school who came to Ball State, but we weren't friends. We just happened to have the pleasure of going to the same high school. But no, I didn't have friends in tow when I came.

Brown: Okay. So did you make friends eventually?

Hall: As an athlete, it wasn't that hard. I practiced every day with eighty, ninety other guys, so we had more in common than most people on campus. Made a few friends on the football team.

Brown: (both talking at once) Okay.

Hall: That's about it. And a couple guys in the dorm. The guys in the dorm I ended up rooming with.

[55:00]

Probably my two best friends in the world are from Ball State.

Brown: Okay.

Hall: But they didn't come here with me. They came separate.

Brown: And how was Muncie different from Fort Wayne?

Hall: Couldn't tell you. I rarely left campus. I can probably count on two hands the number of times that I left campus to go into Muncie. I left campus a lot of times, but it was to places where college students typically were or where they were housed. Like Windsong and some of the other apartment complexes that housed Ball State students. But going into Muncie? It was a rare trip. I went to church a few times. And there was a barbeque place here I think we went a couple times.

[56:00]

I went clubbing one time in Muncie and that was all it took to know that I didn't want to go back. But that's it. We rarely—and I don't know that that's unique to most folks—we rarely went into

Muncie.

Brown: Okay. Even as an athlete—because athletics are sometimes a very big thing for the community—as an athlete, you weren't really in contact with anybody from the community.

Hall: No, I was not one of those people on the team. (laughs)

Brown: What does that mean? (laughs)

Hall: The head coach had certain people that he would have speak to the media, or for events just attend those events. Typically they were seniors. —I wasn't one of those people.

[57:00]

Brown: What was your relationship like with your coaches?

Hall: Ahh, you picked up on that, huh? With the defensive coordinator it was great—a gentleman by the name of Rick Minter. Had a great relationship with him, a great relationship with my position coach. But the head coach, we butted heads. I don't think he really cared for me, and a lot of the time, if I'm honest with myself, the feeling was mutual. We just didn't see eye to eye. He wanted a soldier from the sense that, Do what I ask you to do and don't ask me any questions. You've learned by now in this interview that I'm not that easily swayed. If I have a question, I'm going to ask it, and I really expect an answer. I don't expect to be waved off.

[58:00]

So there were times where we butted heads a lot because I was more vocal. I asked a lot of the questions that I knew my teammates wanted answers to but were too afraid to ask. I didn't mind being odd man out. And he and I just shared different philosophies about a lot of things. He always thought it was black or white, I knew the world was full of grey. So just little things that we had disagreements about, and I found him very difficult to follow.

Brown: And why was that?

Hall: There were times I don't think he was a man of his word.

Brown: And can you give me a specific example of when you two butted heads?

Hall: I can remember we had a situation on the team, we actually went to a bowl game my sophomore year.

[59:00]

And when you go to a bowl game, sometimes they test athletes for drugs. Both anabolic steroids and other drugs, weed or marijuana, whatever you want to say. And if you have it in your bloodstream, you're not allowed to play. Well, we had some players test positive for both. As a

general rule, most black athletes tested positive for weed, most white athletes tested positive for anabolic steroids. (laughs) But the results for the marijuana test came back before we left, which essentially meant that all the players who tested positive for smoking weed got left behind. The test for the anabolic steroids didn't come back until we had (??inaudible) already left and in California.

[1:00:00]

His mantra was, before we left, if that was found to be the truth, he would put you on a plane and send you home. He didn't put them on the plane and send them home. They got out there, they still had their per diem, they sat by the pool—and didn't go home. I had a problem with that. And so when we got back after the bowl game, I told him so. Me and a couple other players went in and says, It's hard for us to trust you from here on out. He didn't like that.

Brown: Okay—.

Hall: So that's probably why we didn't, you asked about being involved with the community and as a presence with the football team, that's probably a big reason why I didn't have a large presence with the community. Because he and I—we never saw eye to eye. And I was not a happy camper.

[1:01:00]

I was pretty vocal. I always looked at it, the worst he could do to me was kick me off the team. Well, I wasn't looking for this team, was kind of my thought process. I can get in school somewhere else. And I had enough people in my corner that that probably would never happen. But just things like that. I like things that are just and right—I don't like the injustice. I don't like things that just aren't quite right. So if I see it, I got a problem with it and I'm going to speak up about it. Some people aren't comfortable with that. They don't like being called to the carpet.

Brown: And would you say your relationship with the coach was common among the players?

Hall: You mean was the attitude of most of the players the same as mine about this particular coach?

[1:02:00]

Brown: Yes.

Hall: I would say it's probably half and half. Half of them were oblivious. They didn't even get the fact that it had happened. They're just living life, not observing life as it's passing them by. At least half of them were just—unaware. And most of the other half didn't care. So yeah. Some did, some didn't. Most didn't probably.

Brown: And what was your relationship like with your teammates?

Hall: Good. Good. I have some people who just hated my guts. But for the most part, I had good teammates. I would say probably with the exception of maybe five guys, I had very good relationships with my teammates.

[1:03:00]

Brown: And how did you know that some of them didn't like you?

Hall: We told each other that. (both laugh)

Brown: Okay. (both laugh) Was the feeling mutual?

Hall: Yes.

Brown: And was it immediately, from when you all—because on a football team, you spend a lot of time together?

Hall: Well, I'll tell you what. I've reconciled with one of them. One of them was just a complete horse's ass. And about, I would say, six or seven years after we graduated, he actually came up to a group of us and apologized for being that way. And he was not in a good place when he was here. You know, parents breaking up, all kinds of things. He just was in a—at the end of the day, he was just hurting, and we were easy targets to lash out at.

[1:04:00]

But he's back in my good graces, but most of the other ones I just tolerate—for the sake of when we come here and go to games and things of that nature. It was so much so that way that this year they did the, I think it was, twenty-fifth reunion or twentieth reunion or something like that, of our bowl team, I didn't even go on the field with them—because the ones that I really wanted to say hi to, I said hi before they went on the field.

Brown: Was there reasons why you all didn't like each other?

Hall: They didn't like the fact that I spoke my mind. I didn't have to agree with them when they said something. And so because I didn't cosign for them, they didn't like that. Because I was verbal about it.

[1:05:00]

And I was competitive all the time. And some of them didn't like that. And so they had to work a little harder in practice than they wanted to. I didn't care. I came to work. Some of them didn't like me because of that, but I'm okay with it.

Brown: And was that just you, or were the ones you were good with—did they also have tension between the ones that were—?

Hall: No, not necessarily, no. Some of it was just me. My mom talked a lot about the Bible and stories in the Bible, and I've read a lot of those stories. One that sticks out is, Jesus ran moneychangers out of the temple. And from that, I took it upon myself to, just because you can be a follower or a Christian doesn't mean you have to be a punk.

[1:06:03]

And so I didn't take a lot of crap. It didn't matter what grade you were in, it didn't matter that you were a junior or you were a senior and I was a freshman. Because it was almost instant—the guys that I didn't get along with—it was pretty much instant. There was no long courtship for us to determine that we didn't like each other. I felt that I deserved the same amount of respect that they did. They didn't think so. They felt that I was an underclassman and should just succumb to whatever they want me to do, and I didn't think that way. I thought more of myself than that. I don't think they liked that.

Brown: Okay. Can you give a specific example of that—of the tension between you two?

Hall: I'll give one example.

[1:07:00]

I was on scout team. And if you don't know what that is, there's a first-string offense, first-string defense, and usually the second-stringers stay with the first-string offense and the first-string defense. Third-string was, it was just what I started as a freshman. I played defense. I typically went with the offense so I could run the other team's defense against our first- and second-string offense. Well, my thought process and how I was raised was, I'm going to help prepare you for the game. And in that preparation, it didn't mean that I made practice easy for you. It meant that I was going to try and do whatever I thought the other team was going to do to make things bad for us. So I told my teammates at the time, I was like, "Hey look. I'm coming. You should get ready because when they hike the ball, I'm coming full tilt.

[1:08:00]

"I'm not just going to rub up against you. You should know that. I'm just letting you know." And apparently they didn't believe me the first or second time. And the head coach really didn't like that. He says, "The other team is not going to do that." Why? And I would question, "Why? I did." (laughs) And so I wreaked a lot of havoc on his offense. So much so that the players began not to like me because they said I went too hard at practice. And I said, "Well, according to him, this is what I'm supposed to be doing. Now you can't tell me you want me to go hard and then tell me to back off at the same time. You got one or the other, man." After a while, people on the offensive line really didn't care for me—because I was doing as I was told, I was helping prepare them for that week's game. They didn't like that. They didn't like working that hard through the week.

[1:09:00]

I had a problem with that—because to me that meant you were willing to settle, you weren't willing to prepare yourself. That's kind of what it meant to me, is you weren't willing to prepare yourself for battle so to speak. I didn't really care for that so it made me want to go even harder when I found out that they were that way. And I ended up getting thrown out of their practice. It was a good thing because I got sent to where the first- and second-string defense were. I ended up making the travel team as a freshman because that was my attitude. I was here to work. It paid off for me—it's always paid off for me so I don't question it.

Brown: Okay. Can you explain your relationship with your professors?

[1:10:00]

Hall: For the most part, I had good relationships with my professors. There was a professor, Hans Banjeree (?). He was a finance professor—Indian. There was Dr. Grunkemeyer (?), I remember her. She was English and Writing. I remember her from the writing building. And is it Newman Williams? I think he was one of our Insurance professors. But those three—I talked to them all the time. I hated Ms. Grunkemeyer when I first met her, but she grew on me. Those three professors I had very good relationships with. The others, they just told you what they needed at the beginning of the class.

[1:11:00]

They—like you guys—they hand out syllabuses and, This is what we're going to do this year, here's when we're going to have tests, here's when we're not going to have tests, and you just kind of go in and out of class. But those three names stuck. Those three people stuck.

Brown: Okay. Going back to the football team a little bit, how many African American players were on your team?

Hall: A lot. I couldn't tell you. It was probably at a 90 probably 40.

Brown: Okay—.

Hall: Certainly more than thirty. Yeah.

Brown: And did that affect your status concerning the student body on campus?

Hall: In what way?

Brown: Like, did the student body respect you more because you were on the football team, or did they know you and—?

[1:12:00]

Hall: I would say the ones that followed the sports teams did, yes. Ball State's kind of a funny place. You have a lot of students here but they all don't really participate in the athletics side.

They're not big fans of athletics here. Ball State lived in the shadow of IU and Purdue and Notre Dame a long time. And so by the time most students get to Ball State, they're either a basketball fan of IU, football fan of Notre Dame, so going to watch the home team play is not as important, if that makes sense. We're still odd man out when it comes to sports.

Brown: Was that how you looked at Ball State when you were younger? Did you, as an athlete—

Hall: I told you I thought Ball State was a teacher's college. That's about it. I mean, my only problem was I wasn't a fan of IU or Notre Dame.

[1:13:00]

(both laugh) Neither one of them mattered that much.

Brown: Okay. Well, you graduated in 1992, right?

Hall: '93.

Brown: '93, okay. Were you excited or nervous or—?

Hall: A little of both. I think I was excited that I was finally done. Nervous because I hadn't yet found the job. One of my classmates, I actually interviewed with his father at a bank in Fort Wayne, and really the son vouched for me, "Henry's a good dude. I think he'll do a good job." He pretty much hired me on the spot. That was one week after graduation, I had a job—unlike a lot of people. And I think a big part of the reason I got the job, well, one of course his son, but two is that I was an athlete.

[1:14:00]

A lot of employers—and I'm one of those employers now—I look to hire people who know how to work in a team setting. I don't need too many alone rangers. I want to know that they're (??) have seen adversity before, found a way to get past it. So now I look for a lot of athletes. That's one of the questions I even ask in the interview process, Have people participated in team sports. But yeah, my anxiety didn't last too long. I had a job a week after graduation.

Brown: So did you want to go back to Fort Wayne after graduation?

Hall: No, but I met a girl. Ended up going back (inaudible??). Been married twenty-two years (inaudible??) now.

Brown: Twenty-two. So when did you get married?

Hall: I got married the summer after I graduated. '93.

[1:15:00]

Brown: And when did you two meet?

Hall: We about a year before that. Actually, I went home for a weekend and I was bouncing at a club. And she walked in and I started running my mouth. (laughs) Apparently she liked what I was saying.

Brown: So you all met when you were still in school?

Hall: Um-hm. Yeah. She did not attend Ball State and my wife didn't attend college. We met—she already had a good job, and in that kind of destination for college, you want to go to school so you can get a good job. She had a good job. Made a lot more than I did, first year.

Brown: And what's your wife's name?

Hall: Tina.

Brown: Tina. And you said she is from Fort Wayne also?

Hall: No, she's actually from Beloit, Wisconsin.

Brown: Okay. So what brought her to Fort Wayne?

[1:16:00]

Hall: General Motors. She moved down with the plant. Her father, mother, and brother both worked at the plant with her. So they all transferred down. Their father was in management at General Motors, so they all came down, all employed by General Motors.

Brown: Okay. And do you all have children?

Hall: We have two.

Brown: And what are their names?

Hall: Hannibal and Tattenai.

Brown: Okay. And how old are they?

Hall: Seventeen and fourteen.

Brown: Okay. And you also have another child, right?

Hall: I do. Unfortunately I didn't quite make it out of Ball State—made it out of high school, not out of college without a kid, yeah. Danin. He's twenty-two now.

Brown: And is he in school?

Hall: No. I wish. He does music.

[1:17:00]

And pretty good at it. I can give you his YouTube channel if you want it. But no. He has a passion for music, and that's kind of what he does.

Brown: Okay. As far as encouraging school or education, is that something that you encourage your children?

Hall: Yes—quite a bit. It's expected in my house. Now it's not always college. I expect them to get some sort of secondary education. If you happen to love everything that it means to be an electrician, be an electrician. If you want to be a doctor, be a doctor. But find something you're going to love doing and do it. So it's not necessarily, Go to school, get a four-year college degree in liberal arts because dad wants you to go to college.

[1:18:00]

It's not that kind of party. I want them to find something they love and they enjoy doing, and learn how to be better at it because I think that's what college ought to be. College should guide you in helping you kind of really pare down all these choices you have out there as a career. It should help you hone what it is you really want and don't want, so that hopefully when you graduate, you at least know what field of study you enjoy. And hopefully you can find a job that will allow you to continue that same excitement and feeling of joy for many years to come. Something you can build a career out of and not hate getting up, going to work every morning.

Brown: And earlier, towards the beginning, we talked about how your parents had to have certain discussions with you. As a parent, do you have those discussions with your children?

[1:19:00]

Hall: Does racism still exist?—Yes, I still have discussions with my children.—Yes.

Brown: Is it as obvious to them as it was to you (both talk at the same time) when—?

Hall: No. No, it's a little more covert now. They smile in your face now, and then they have their discussions when they get home too. "Now it's okay that Billy is your friend, but I'd rather you not marry Billy. We're white and he's black, so that's kind of a no-no." So they still have their discussions, we still have ours. I tell my kids to marry whoever they want to. They should just marry somebody who's going to treat them well and love them. And I tell them that if they marry someone outside their race, they need to be able to stick up for them. They need to be able to love on them in front of anybody. They need to be able to challenge people who question them and their love for one another.

[1:20:00]

So I don't have that feeling of, You have to stay in this one spot. I think that's very limiting. But I tell my kids they ought to marry somebody because they love them. They ought to marry somebody because they have something in common with them, because they're headed to the same place—irrespective of color.

Brown: Okay—.

Hall: Hopefully we've grown as a nation, that we can accept that. Most of us can I think.

Brown: How has Fort Wayne changed in terms of when you grew up there and when they're growing up there now?

Hall: Unfortunately not much. Fort Wayne is not a very progressive city—at all. People still have their little cliques and everything else. But no, Fort Wayne is not a very progressive place. I'm encouraging my children to leave Fort Wayne.

[1:21:00]

Brown: Okay. And going back to more of the employment side of college and even after college, in your opinion, did Ball State prepare you for the workforce?

Hall: I would say, yes, as best they could. When you go in the workforce, they want to know that you have a basic understanding of the field that you're in. But most employers are going to teach you what they want you to know. They're going to teach you the way they want it to be taught. I'll give you a simple example is, here at Ball State in Finance, they tell you, If you're going to start a business, borrow the money. __In the world it __ (??) doesn't work that way. I went to go work for a bank. They said, well if they don't have any money, we're not lending them any money. So there is some sort of disconnect between education and the real world. And I would think that things like that happen probably more often than not.

[1:22:00]

Just because every employer's going to teach you, give you their own little twist on what it is that you do for them as an organization. School can only take you so far. Once you receive your education, really all that piece of paper does is tell somebody, They can or cannot learn, in my opinion. If I'm hiring for a specific job, I don't only relegate people to having that degree because I figured if you learn biology, you can learn what I'm going to teach you too. You can learn electronics. I'm just going to give you some training courses and move you over, or actually, you might be better suited for what I want to do mentally. So your background may suite you in this role better than another.

[1:23:00]

So I try not to limit my applicants to a certain degree because, again, I'm going to teach you or send you to school or training to learn what I want you to learn, and how we operate as a business. So I don't think it's quite as important as it used to be for most degrees. If you want to

be a trainer, I'd take somebody who is in teaching or someone who is in communications or someone who is just a general studies degree. It really depends on what you show me in the interview process, or if I speak to something, some work that you've done before. Again, I try not to pigeonhole people. I think more and more employers are headed that way.

Brown: Okay. And speaking of employment, what employment did you have after you graduated from school? We talked about one of them at a bank.

Hall: I became a credit analyst at the bank. At the time it was called Fort Wayne National Bank.

[1:24:00]

Today, several acquisitions later, it's now PNC [Pittsburgh National Corporation] bank. And all a credit analyst does is, for commercial applications, you analyze a business' credit worthiness. So that's what I did. I did that for two years.

Brown: (inaudible both at same time) And you currently work at SkyTech?

Hall: Yes.

Brown: And what is that?

Hall: We manufacture remote controls and gas valve systems for fireplaces.

Brown: Okay. And what's your position there?

Hall: President. (both laugh)

Brown: Okay. And also, in 2004 you received the Top Forty Under Forty—

Hall: Yes.

Brown: —award? What is this?

Hall: Fort Wayne business journal has an award.

[1:25:00]

They pick a group of kids—I shouldn't say "kids"—young adults, all under the age of forty, as they see having an impact on their community, and the next batch of successful people in Fort Wayne. So they do that every year. I happened to be fortunate enough to be on the list.

Brown: And how did being recognized in that way feel?

Hall: It was good being recognized. Didn't change my life.

Brown: Did it change your career at all?

Hall: Unh-uh. It didn't add dollars to my pocket, nope.

Brown: What did that entail? Was it just a mention or was it a ceremony?

Hall: It was a whole write-up, plaque, presentation, the whole nine. But again it's forty of us. And it's not like I became the top guy or the top five. It was forty people that they mentioned.

[1:26:00]

It had to deal with participating in the arts, participating in not-for-profits, seen as a game changer in your industry, those kind of things. But it really didn't help or hurt me. I guess, if anything, until you called, that plaque was in my closet on the shelf. I had to go get it to see who I got it from when I was talking to you on the phone. It's not prominently displayed in my home or business. (laughs)

Brown: Okay. Kind of coming back to how Ball State affected you after—were there any lessons that you learned at Ball State that you took with you throughout your post-graduation career?

Hall: Specifically Ball State? I would say I'm sure there're some.

[1:27:00]

The ones that come to mind I can't necessarily pick one, aside from maybe some things that I learned as a football player here. I've been fortunate to have some very good coaches. Rick Minter was one of them. Ray McCartney was another one. The reason I really enjoyed my relationship with Rick Minter was, he was one of those coaches that always told you the truth, even if you didn't want to hear it. Either you had a very good game or you didn't. "Here's what you can do better." There was never a point in speaking to him where he made you out to be perfect. That I think I took away from him in how I approach the team of folks who I work with. I try and be honest with them, I try and be forthright with them, and I try and point out errors that they can improve on.

[1:28:00]

I may spend a little more time talking about things that they do well then (laughs) Coach Minter did, but I think that's the day and age that we live in. People like affirmation. So you have to spend some time doing that if you're going to point some things that they need to improve upon. You need to spend some time talking about what they do well. But from Ray McCartney I think I learned that in public he always had my back, regardless of what the situation was. He always said that I'm going to be right behind you. You don't have to worry about suffering too much abuse from too many other areas. He said, "I'll be right there waiting on you." He says, "But when it's just us? I'm going to lay into you like nobody's business." And for me that was important because I needed people to be honest with me.

[1:29:00]

I do a lot of self-introspection or introspective. And I look at myself a lot and things I'm doing well, things I'm doing poorly, things I can get better at, things I want to take the time to get better at. Because there're some things I don't care that I'm horrible at, and I think that's okay. Other things I can't afford to be lagging behind doing. So I do a lot of that, and I think that skill has served me over the years too because I don't think of myself more highly than I ought to.

Brown: Okay. And too, what was Rink Minter's position?

Hall: He was defensive coordinator, assistant head coach.

Brown: Okay. And what about Ray McCartney? What was his (both talk at same time) position?

Hall: He coached outside linebackers, which is what I was.

[1:30:00]

Brown: Okay. Well, before we conclude, is there anything else that we haven't covered in this interview that you would like others to know about your experiences at Ball State or just in life?

Hall: I agree with this one statement, Attitude is everything. So the better your attitude, the easier it's going to be to move forward.

Brown: Okay. So going back to Ball State, was there any issues with race as a member of the football team?

[1:31:00]

Hall: (laughs) Yes, yes. Actually, the funny part is, I actually felt comfortable because there was. And I know that sounds funny, but that made Ball State like every other place (laughs) in America. On my recruiting visit, the blacks and the whites on the football team got in a fight—and I still chose to come. Again, it wasn't any different than home. The sad truth is it was familiar. So again, my expectations when I came here—I didn't really have any. It was just another place to go to school, learn. My goal was to learn as much as I could while I was here. — That's really the only goal I had, and to graduate. But if you had asked me what my two goals were, that would've been it.

[1:32:00]

To learn as much as I could and graduate.

Brown: Okay. So with the issues with race, was it teammates or students?

Hall: Yes, both.

Brown: Can you give a specific example?

Hall: Like, the one teammate I said apologized? It was pretty much all race. Somebody not in his race took his position—at least that's what he thought—and he was not happy about it. He later got it back, but that's because he worked his butt off to get it back. He earned it, like we're all supposed to—the same guy who later apologized. For the most part, we're not that different.

[1:33:00]

We want the same things.

Brown: Were there any issues of race, as far as being on campus with other students who weren't a part of the football team?

Hall: Not that I'm aware of. But I didn't hang around people I didn't like. (laughs) And I had enough people I liked that, when we encountered something like that, they usually didn't win. (laughs)

Brown: Okay. Did your experience in high school prepare you for your experience here at Ball State?

Hall: I would say yes. I would say yes. I had some very good teachers in high school, and when I got here, I wasn't behind, I wasn't trailing or anything like that. I mean, I would say I was on par or maybe even a little ahead of where most students were when they got here.

[1:34:00]

In terms of education, I didn't see any struggles. Most of my struggles were created by me. And I would say that me and my attitude when I came in—I knew I was smart, and so when somebody challenged me on something like that, I didn't back down. I was headstrong, still am today. I got into some challenges because I didn't back down. But other than that, I had fun when I was here, and I don't mean just partying. I enjoyed my time here.

[1:35:00]

For me and I think a lot of students, it's that grace period you get between being an adult where you have to fend for yourself, and being at home with your parents, with them being responsible for you. It was a wonderful grace period where I kind of got to mature and decide what kind of adult I wanted to be. So for me that period of four to five years was great for me because I got to figure out who I was, what I wanted to be known for, who I wanted to be aside from all the stereotypes that come along with being a color or being an athlete. I got to decide to be more than just that. For me, Ball State allowed me the opportunity to do that. But I think that's probably how most students feel as they get an opportunity to come to a college or university and find themselves.

[1:36:00]

For me, it wasn't a long trip. I pretty much knew who I wanted to be. I wasn't sure whether or not that was possible, and I guess what I found here is that it was possible.

Brown: And you mentioned stereotypes that would be associated with you as a certain color or an athlete. What stereotypes?

Hall: Dumb jock—that's a big one. I was on the team and my mental aptitude was small in comparison to some of my teammates. I graduated—well, I didn't graduate—a guy graduated from our team, who works at (laughs) the medical hospital MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]. He's working on a cure for cancer. I'm not that smart. He is. We had several guys on our team like that, who were just brainiacs. I remember that guy, his name's Ted Ashburn, I remember him—

[1:37:00]

After practice, he would sit there and literally type out the whole practice as he remembered it. He was pretty spot-on (laughs) most of the time. So for me, I was fortunate that I had other people to look to that were doing quite well on their own, and they helped push me to do better. Because there were times when I could skate through and just be the average student and not really go to class, just read the book and skate by. They encouraged me to do better than that. Again Ball State was one of those schools—and again, I don't have any experience with another school so I can only speak to Ball State—I think there was enough of the good, the bad, and the ugly that you got a real representation of what life was going to be like when you graduated, when you left here.

[1:38:00]

So like high school, I think Ball State helped prepare me for that—where you have students here, pretty much from every walk of life. We had students here from different countries and having the opportunity to sit down and talk with them. Most of us, again, want the same things. And that was refreshing to know because I didn't always think that way. It's easy to become jaded and think that this person doesn't like you for one reason or another and think that reason in enveloped in race. Well, that's not the case, and I found that out here. People can just not like you because they don't like you—they don't need a reason. (laughs)

[1:39:00]

So even though I know and understand race is a big part of who we are as a country and our history, it's not the only deciding factor when it comes to likes and dislikes.

Brown: Okay. And you mentioned that being headstrong led to some challenges on campus. Can you give an example of that?

Hall: I would say I really can't speak to any one specific example. Let's just say I didn't back down a lot. But no real, specific examples. Other than challenging professors about a question or

something like that and bringing the resources saying, "It's right here in the book. Yeah, I know what's in that book, but here's what I found when I was doing research" or something like that.

[1:40:00]

Other than examples like that, I really don't have any specific examples.

Brown: Okay. Is there anything else that you would like to touch on?

Hall: It'd be another discussion. Not this one, no.

Brown: Okay. Well, on behalf of the Ball State University African American Alumni Oral History project, I'd like to thank you very much for your participation.

Hall: (inaudible??) Good, good, good.

[1:40:29]

End of interview

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Ball State University African-American Alumni Oral History Project

Archival Identification:

Interviewer(s): Charelle Brown

Interviewee(s): Jenell Joiner

Interview Supervisor(s): Michael Doyle

Date of interview: March 28, 2015

Brown: Hello. My name is Charelle Brown. Today's date is March 28, 2015, and I am interviewing Mrs. Jenell Joiner on the Ball State campus as a part of the African American Alumni Oral History project. Hello, Mrs. Joiner.

Joiner: Hello. How are you?

Brown: I'm good, thank you. How are you?

Joiner: Fine, (both talk at same time) thank you.

Brown: That's good. Let's begin. So how old are you?

Joiner: I'm seventy-two years old.

Brown: Okay. And where were you born?

Joiner: I was born in Mississippi.

Brown: Oh (both talk at same time) okay.

Joiner: Yes. Um-hm.

Brown: How long did you live there?

Joiner: Oh I left as a child. I was about maybe almost four when I came north. My father found work in the steel mills. You know, I'm from Northwest Indiana, and the steel mills were hiring.

[1:00]

And so so many of the farm people, the African Americans especially, that lived on the farms and worked on the farms came north to work in the steel mills. And then some of them went on

up into the Detroit area to work in the automobile industry. And so that's how we ended up coming to the Northwest Indiana, Chicago area. Um-hm.

Brown: So you all had your own farm, or did you work on a farm?

Joiner: My father, not their own farm, they—I don't know if this is called subsistence farming—where they had small plots of land. But actually, what happened was that my father was one of the first African Americans to work as a Pullman porter for the Illinois Central Railroad. Then he got called to the army and he was in World War I.

[2:00]

And then after coming from the army, then they—after he was released from the army—then he came north looking for work. Because I was born, my sister had been born, and my mother was a teacher there in the South, but the pay was very, very minimal. And so they came north looking for better opportunities in work. Um-hm.

Brown: And was the steel mills considered a better opportunity?

Joiner: Well yes, because there was work and then they had pay that you could live on. And that's why he came. But he had to do shift work, and he didn't like shift work because he didn't like leaving his family at night. You're working midnights, his family would be at home at night. So then he became a plasterer and he started his own business. That's another (laughs) story altogether.

[3:00]

In that, there was a man there who's deceased now. His name was Andrew Means. And he—let's see. I'm trying to think. What college was that?—he went to Tuskegee. And at Tuskegee they had—you know where they trained the carpenters and the plasterers and the builders? Well, he learned his trade there, and he came to the Northwest Indiana area, and he became a very prominent, very successful, and he was a trustee in our church. Well, my dad, being from Mississippi, knew that there was a minister there that was also from Mississippi that he knew had a church in our area. So he came, when he came to our city, he looked up this minister. Well, Mr. Means was a trustee there.

[4:00]

And so they got together and he told them he needed some plasterers. And so he trained my daddy as a plasterer. And from there my daddy started his own business. And then from there he became a contractor where he built houses. And so that's the story of how (laughs) we got there. Yes.

Brown: Wow, okay. So when you left Mississippi, where did you all move to?

Joiner: We moved to Gary, Indiana.

Brown: Gary, Indiana. And what was growing up in Gary like?

Joiner: Okay. Growing up in Gary was very interesting in that we were very happy. We never lacked for anything. When we first got to Gary, we lived in a segregated area. And not that we realized that it was segregated, because people just gravitated to the area where there were other people that were like them and that they were comfortable with. And many people moved near their relatives.

[5:00]

And so I went to a great school in elementary school from kindergarten through sixth grade. And I think we may have had one white family that lived in that particular school district. But it was, (laughs) my father-in-law refers to it as living on a reservation, in that the area that we lived in, which was a large area, was called Midtown. And that's where, you know, they had the Froebel High School, they had Roosevelt High School. Those were the only two high schools.

[6:00]

Now Froebel High School was a mixed school in that the Europeans, the old Europeans, had moved and settled in that area, which was—Oh let's see—it was really on the—it's in Midtown— but it was more on the western edge of it. And so that was mixed. But the rest of it, where we went on the southern edge to Roosevelt High School, that was all black there in that area. We lived well. Our parents worked, had steady incomes. My mother became a teacher. She was a teacher when she was in Mississippi but she got her Indiana license when we moved to Gary. So we had an income, we lived well. We were very sheltered. We were insulated from any bad things happening to us. We were watched very carefully. Life was good growing up in Gary. We had found a sweet spot.

[7:00]

I would like to say this, That my parents grew up in the church. Their parents grew up in the church. So we were very religious, and so we depended upon the Lord a lot. There's a scripture said, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High God abides under the shadow of the Almighty." That's where we lived, in that "secret place," and life was good for us.

Brown: Okay. And how did growing up in the church and having parents like you did, how did that affect the values and the things that they emphasized with you all?

Joiner: Well, we were taught to be honest. We were taught not to steal or take anything that did not belong to us that we didn't work hard—, and we had strong work ethic. Very strong work ethic. And there were just certain moral rules that we just did not break.

[8:00]

And our parents—when we came up, we could not call boys on the telephone. If we wanted to go

to a party or something, we told them. They allowed us to go, and they would not allow us to go to anyone's house unless they knew their parents and that their parents were going to be there. That was the life that we lived. And we were encouraged to have other friends whose parents had the same values as our parents had. And so if we had friends that was outside of that circle who our parents didn't know and they didn't have the same values, we didn't let our (laughs) parents know that. But we didn't veer away from the way that we were raised. And our parents were very strict. My mother did the disciplining. My father didn't, but my mother did the disciplining.

Brown: Okay.

[9:00]

Interesting. So you mentioned having a sister.

Joiner: Um-hm.

Brown: Is she your only sibling?

Joiner: She's my only sibling, yes.

Brown: And was she older or—?

Joiner: She's younger.

Brown: She's younger than you. Okay. Was she born in Mississippi or (both talk at same time) here?

Joiner: Yes. We both were.

Brown: Okay. So when you were younger, the civil rights movement going on in America was just starting to be more public. In 1954, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to integrate schools was implemented. How did this affect you, or had you heard about it?

Joiner: It did not affect us one bit because, I said, we lived in a reservation and our schools had districts. And at that time, you didn't move across districts. They knew (??) we had no bussing. (laughs) So we walked to school, we walked home. And our parents took us to school and picked us up.

[10:00]

So really it didn't impact us because we were around all African Americans, people just like us. Now, people who lived on the fringe, the outer edges, like near the Tolleston area, they would go into Tolleston to school. And then the Emerson area, they would go into Emerson school. But those were not considered a part of Midtown, see. So those are the only two schools that I know of that—of course now, Horace Mann was a long time, that's a high school, being integrated. And Vohr school moreso. But eventually, all the schools became totally African American, see.

Because the Whites moved out and left Gary, and moved to South County, which is the Merrillville area.

[11:00]

And they moved to Schererville, they moved to—you know, as more African Americans came in, the Whites would move out.

Brown: Okay. So—

Joiner: So it's essentially an all black town, I should say that.

Brown: Um-hm. Okay. So did you all hear about things like Emmett Till?

Joiner: Oh yes. Oh yes. It was in Jet magazine, the pictures and—it was horrible, and we thought that it was absolutely horrible. I will say this, that my grandparents still lived in the South. And every summer, we would go south and stay with them and visit them. Now I know the first time that I was aware of prejudice was when we were driving south, and we would always pack our lunches, we would eat our lunches, and it was a highlight because we, whoo, we had the fried chicken and all the cakes and the daa-ta daa-ta daa- daa.

[12:00]

And we stopped. Well, we had passed Cairo, Illinois and we stopped to get gas. And I got out of the car, and I was about ten or eleven years old. And mother said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm going to the bathroom." She said, "You can't go to the bathroom here. Don't you know that?" —I had no idea—I said, "Why?" Because before then, I would go the bathroom when we would get out of the car. But right at Cairo, Illinois, we could not do that. And then she had to explain to me why. When we would catch the train from Chicago going to Jackson, Mississippi, at Cairo, Illinois, which is the last stop right there on the border between Illinois and Kentucky, the train would stop, and it would stop for a long time.

[13:00]

And somehow they would change the cars, and we would have to move because African Americans could not sit in the front of the train, they must sit in the back of the train, in the rear cars (laughs) when they entered into Dixie, the southern part of the United States. Now I do remember that. We would have to get up and we would have to move to the rear cars. Or if there were enough African Americans on that train, they would take the car and somehow in the roundhouse put it near the end. And I remember that. And that was my first awareness that, Hey, this is kind of different. But it did not affect me negatively in that I was outraged by it. I guess because I was so young. It's like, Oh well. This is a happening.

[14:00]

Brown: And about how old were you when you had this realization?

Joiner: I must've been about either ten, eleven, or twelve. I was a child then.

Brown: And when you go south for the summers, did you notice anything different?

Joiner: Well, yes I did. But it never bothered me because we were so insulated. We lived good in the South. As a matter of fact, my grandparents lived on a corner that separated the black community from the white community. So that corner where they lived (laughs) was the boundary line so to speak. But we knew that when we went downtown, there were special water fountains that we could drink from. And those water fountains (laughs) were always broken or were dirty. When we went to catch the train to go back north, we had a special station that had colors on it.

[15:00]

And we would stay in that particular waiting area until our train came. And then we would get on the train, and of course we were going back north, we had to get on the cars that were in the rear.

Brown: And did your parents ever have to explain to you or try to explain to you all why this was?

Joiner: Um-hm. And they did. Yeah, they did.

Brown: And what did they tell you all about it?

Joiner: They just told us because we were, at that time we said Negroes, and this is the way it was between blacks and whites. And that's how the rules were, and that's what we did.

Brown: And as a child, do you remember how you felt about that?

Joiner: It was like you're saying—okay, if a parent said to you, "You cannot cross the street because the street is too busy, because there're too many cars. Do not cross that street." "Okay." And it was accepted because that was the way it was. And everybody did it, so that was the way it was. And so it was accepted.

[16:00]

I was not outraged by it as a child.

Brown: Um-hm. Okay. And—

Joiner: Of course my parents always grew up that way. So that was a part—it's just like eating southern food (laughs?). We have the food we call the soul food that we learn to eat and love in South. And then you come north and you're introduced to other foods, you just accept it. It was just a passing thing that you just accepted. And you learn to live within those con-fines. You learn to live and to function and to succeed within those particular rules.

Brown: And at what point did you become outraged about it?

Joiner: I never did become, I should say quote, unquote, outraged.

[17:00]

I thought it was wrong and I did not think it was fair, but you learn to work within the system and manipulate the system to your advantage. That's what a lot of us learn to do.

Brown: And did anybody have to teach you how to do that?

Joiner: Nope. No. Children are like little sponges. Young people are like little sponges. They just see things and they just absorb and they learn how to work the system. You know how children learn to pit one parent against the other? (laughs) "Daddy said I can do this," after mama said no. Okay. Well, that's the same way it is. And nobody teaches them to do that. Nobody (laughs) teaches them to lie, see. So you learn to work within the system. You learn to manipulate the system to your advantage. And that's what we learned to do.

[18:00]

Brown: Okay. Going back a little bit, what were your parents' names?

Joiner: My mother's name was Dorothy and my dad's name was Holly (??).

Brown: Okay. And what was your sister's name?

Joiner: Sandra.

Brown: Okay. So you mentioned that you went to Roosevelt High School?

Joiner: Um-hm.

Brown: And you said it was all African American?

Joiner: Um-hm.

Brown: What was high school like for you?

Joiner: Well, it was interesting. (both laugh) Now, I was introduced to a wider socioeconomic range of kids when I got to high school. So then there became competition between the haves and, quote, unquote, the have-nots, for use of a better term.

[19:00]

And so the ones that decided not to like one group as opposed to another, that presented a

problem. So you had to learn how to get along with them. So that made it more difficult until I learned to work the system or not be bothered or offended by the particular attitudes because of certain things such as, if there were parties and your parents or mom would not let you go because she did not know their parents, then attitudes develop because of that, Oh, she thinks she's too good to come. No, it wasn't that (laughs). My parents would not let me come. I could not go to some of the games, especially the basketball games, because it was so far away, and walk home.

[22:00]

Some of the other children were allowed to walk home. One of the ways we got around it with the football game was because we had a friend who, we belonged to the same church so our parents knew each other. Well, the football stadium was close to her house and she had two older brothers. So my parents would take us to the game and we would meet up with them and we would get to walk home to her house where my parents would come and pick us up. So it looked as though we were able to do things that the other children who did not have as many restrictions on them, we were able to do what they were doing. But it was good. And we got, in many instances, we got more preferential treatment from the teachers because they knew our parents, our parents were at the school.

[21:00]

So we would get preferential treatments in some areas.

Brown: And did your mom—

Joiner: Which was not fair. You should get it based on your own merit.

Brown: Right.

Joiner: Um-hm.

Brown: Did your mom teach at the school that you went to?

Joiner: No. No. No. When she began teaching, I was in junior high, and she always taught lower elementary education.

Brown: Okay. And you mentioned there was division in your school.

Joiner: Um-hm.

Brown: And that was within the African American community.

Joiner: Yeah. Yes, because Roosevelt was a totally African American school.

Brown: Okay—

Joiner: There weren't even any teachers that were not of color teaching there.

Brown: Okay. And would you say that your values were typical in the African American community at that time?

[22:00]

Joiner: What do you mean? The values of my family?

Brown: Yes.

Joiner: Uh—I'm just trying to—You know, I really don't know. I really couldn't say definitely. I think some of the other friends tended to have more freedom than some of the rest of us did. We did not have a lot of freedoms at all. But one thing we were able to do that kids today cannot do, we were able to walk downtown and shop, and then walk back home. And walk about five miles to school and walk back home in groups. And they cannot do that now because it is not safe now. There's, on the TV, I don't know if you saw it, about this couple.

[23:00]

They tend to be parents of free-range children, they had free-range beliefs. And they would allow their children to walk to the library—and they're young children—to walk to the library, and to walk around the neighborhood, and to go places, and they were turned in to the family services or something because their children were not having enough supervision, and the authorities felt that they were endangering them. It was on TV. Well, up north it was on TV, and they were defending their position. Well, we did that routinely when I was a child, but not it's not allowed because it's not safe. So I think the human condition has changed—from when we were younger.

[24:00]

Brown: Um-hm. Okay. So we were talking about the division in the African American community. And oftentimes, we hear that there's a difference between how people are treated if you were light-skinned or if you were darker-skinned. Did you ever experience division because you are fairer-skinned?

Joiner: Um-hm. Yes. The darker-skinned young people tended to be distrustful or suspicious of the lighter-skinned. And Oh Lord, don't have hair. Oh my goodness, if you had long hair, it was horrible. So we tended to be ostracized. But we had our friends.

[25:00]

When you have a community of friends, when you have support, it does not impact you as much as if you were just that one out there by yourself. So we had our friends. It didn't make any difference. And we still see it when we go back for high school reunions. You still see it.

Brown: The same division (both at same time) kind of exists?

Joiner: Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah.

Brown: Okay. Interesting. Were you a part of any extracurricular activities?

Joiner: In high school?

Brown: Yes ma'am.

Joiner: Let's see. We had girls intramural sports, and I played on that. I ran for office of, I think I was recording secretary—corresponding secretary of my senior class. And—I'm trying to think—mostly I just had to get my grades.

[26:00]

My (laughs) parents wanted me to study and make sure that I had good grades. But we did do a lot with, I think it was called a GAA, Girls—that's what it was—the Girls Athletic Association, and I was very active with that.

Brown: And what sports did you play?

Joiner: Every sport that came out. Of course, I didn't do cross-country. But we had the basketball, we played volleyball, and it was a form of soccer that we played, and I cannot think of what the name of that was.

Brown: And did you all play just against people within your schools, or did you—?

Joiner: Yes, within our schools. We had teams within schools. Oh, and I ran track. In elementary school, I ran track. I didn't in high school.

Brown: Okay. Did you only play against other African Americans?

[27:00]

Joiner: Yes, within our school. We had a very large high school and we had teams within the school. At that time, only the boys would go and play against other schools, basketball and football and run track. I think we ran track at a track meet against other schools in elementary school, but the girls did not play against other schools. That was just citywide, I think that might've been statewide. Now young people, you know, they play against other schools. We didn't do that then. Only the boys did that.

Brown: Okay.

Joiner: So it's changed a lot.

Brown: Right. Were you involved in any activities at your church?

Joiner: As a young child?

Brown: Yes.

Joiner: Oh yes. (laughs)

[28:00]

We had to go to Sunday school, we went to stay for church services, we came back for BYP youth—that's Baptist Youth Training Program—and then had to stay for night services. So we were in four different services every Sunday. And we would get home and it was—I don't know if you remember the Loretta Young Show—but she would come and throw this door open and she'd have a pretty dress on and she's twirl around and she would welcome the audience to the new show. We got home and mama would let us stay up long enough to see Loretta Young twirl into the room, and (laughs) then we'd have to go to bed because we had to go to school the next day. So anyway, Sunday was a full day of church. So I ended up going to church, and you now the little things that kids do.

[29:00]

They let you be the secretary of something, they'll let you chair a meeting, and I learned to play the pianos and they would let me play the piano for some of the kids' programs when they would sing, and I would—oh, as an adult, I did join the choir though I can't sing. They convinced me to join the choir. And then I played the organ sometimes. But that was about it.

Brown: Right. Okay. And going back to high school, you were actually in high school when the Little Rock Nine incident happened in Arkansas I believe it was. Did you hear about this?

Joiner: I'm trying to remember. Now, what was the Little Rock Nine?

Brown: It's when—I'm sorry. It was Alabama—when nine high schoolers were actually the first black students to go to a formerly all white school.

Joiner: Yes, yes. I remember that. That was Governor Wallace wasn't it, that was the governor back then?

Doyle: It's Arkansas. Little Rock, Arkansas.

Brown: Oh, it is Arkansas.

[30:00]

(both at same time) Sorry.

Joiner: Arkansas? Uh-huh.

Brown: Yes, sorry.

Joiner: Was that Governor Wallace—?

Doyle: Orval Faubus. Orval Faubus.

Joiner: Oh, Faubus. Okay. But Wallace, he did something. I remember him.

Doyle: (inaudible)??

Joiner: I remember that. Was that Ruby Bridges—the Little Rock Nine?

Doyle: Yes—.

Joiner: No, okay. Well, no, no. I don't remember that.

Doyle: _____(??) Ruby Bridges?

Brown: I think the Little Rock Nine was high school.

Doyle: It is. Right, yeah. And she—that's right—she was elementary.

Brown: Um-hm.

Doyle: Okay. Right(??). So just talk about school desegregation in general with—

Brown: Okay.

Doyle: —with the aftermath of the *Brown* decision.

Brown: Okay. Did you all hear about the large things happening down south when they tried to desegregate the schools?

Joiner: Yes. I think it was Ruby Bridges that—this was in Alabama I think—and Governor Wallace was the governor, and he stood firm and he was not going to let the schools be desegregated.

[31:00]

And they had to call in the Guard [National Guard], and they had to have federal marshals to take this little girl—little bitty thing—into school. And, bless her heart—it makes me tear up—she walked in there and she had a teacher, her white teacher, who welcomed her with open arms, and it was so good to her. Yes, I remember that. And I remember the jeering. I remember this one little girl, and all of these adults and these big old, burly men just cursing at her and jeering.

But she walked in with her head up high. Yes, I remember that well.

[32:00]

And I remember when-uh Charlene—I can't remember her name now—when she went to—I can't remember the college now—but she desegregated a college. And the man—Ole Miss—I remember when he came in. Uh—

Doyle: James Meredith?

Joiner: —What's—

Doyle: James Meredith?

Joiner: James Meredith. Yes. I remember that and what he had to go through also. They paid a lot of dues for us. And I remember (laughs) Charlene came in and she went through school. And one of the things that she said when she went, that she had to have the courage of her own convictions. And that was one of the things that—there comes a time when you know that right is right. Whether people are against you or not, you must have the courage of your own convictions to stand for what you believe.

[33:00]

Brown: Yes. And did you all see these events on TV?

Joiner: Yeah. Yes, we did. Now, I remember when they had the March on Washington. I think I was in college then. Oh, and we had friends that were getting on buses and they were traveling down south for that first—No, that wasn't the March on Washington. They were desegregating the school—No, they were desegregating. And they brought the fire hoses and the dogs out after them. Well, our friends—the guys were—they got on these buses and they went south. And I knew I didn't want to go because I knew my parents were (laughs) not going to let us go. But they were gung ho and they really ran into a barrage of difficulty. But we see the fire hoses now on TV. We see the dogs. And this was during the time that I think I was in my early twenties when that happened.

[34:00]

And so many people of the young people from our area got on buses and went down there. I'm thinking it was—you know, I can't remember which state that was, uh—

Doyle: Birmingham.

Joiner: That's right. Birmingham. Yeah.

Brown: Okay. So watching these things happen on TV even in high school, how did it make you and your family feel?

Joiner: Well, I felt that it was interesting and I thought that the people who were doing these things were very brave. I didn't know that I would have the fortitude to do anything like that. I know my parents weren't going to let me do anything like that. But it was so interesting when I would go south in the summertime. These things were going on down there. I know I was down there once and there was this huge explosion.

[35:00]

And somebody had bombed one of the buildings where the civil rights workers would come. And they bombed that building. But I'm from the area where they had the three civil rights workers that were killed there in Philadelphia, Mississippi area. See, Chaney and—I'm trying to think of—Schwerner and—it was one other. And—

Brown: Goodman.

Joiner: And anyway, they were there in my hometown. And what is so interesting is that they found them in—they have a reservoir that they had built—and they found them I think buried in some of the dirt and stuff there.

[36:00]

But seemingly, who turned them in—this is, (laughs) oral history, this is what we hear—was the, I think it was the Methodist or the Presbyterian minister in town. But there was also there in town a dress shop, which was a very exclusive apparel shop for women, and these people that owned it, they helped to turn in information to catch these guys who killed these three civil rights workers. And do you know, the citizens of that town ran them out of business. They refused to do business with them. And so they lost their business. And then there was a minister who also helped, who couldn't live with what had happened to the three civil rights workers.

[37:00]

And he helped to turn __state's__(?) evidence. Now, that's the story that they tell in the city. (laughs) But one of the guys who was the sheriff there—I mean, whoo, he was a big man. And he was scary. I mean, he was known to kill black people. But what they do not know is that he loved black women. And the (laughs) black men that he would kill would be the (laughs) men that had an eye for his black women that he liked. So he was very bigoted in one area, but in another area he was not. And I understand from some of the citizens that he was one of the nicest people that you would want to meet. But they say—and I do not know if it's true or not—that he may have known something about what happened to the civil rights workers.

[38:00]

But my father's sister who was a nurse, and she worked at a veteran's hospital. And he got very ill and he had to go to the veteran's hospital. And guess who was his nurse? My aunt. But she said he was the nicest man. Very nice. So you have people with these personalities that are strong. Persons who are bigoted, but on the other hand, they can be very, very kind. For instance,

as I told you, my grandparents lived on the corner that was the separation and division line for the white community to begin and the black community ended, or the black community ended and the white community to begin. All the neighbors got along fine. They got along fine. They would go chat with each other. And the policeman down the street had some little boys.

[39:00]

And they would come and they would get my fruit out of my grandparents' fruit trees. And he would march them right back, and he would say, "You ask. You don't go in anybody's yard and get their fruit off of their fruit tree," he said, "unless you ask." And he made them call them mister and missus. So there was something that kind of was strange (laughs) there in that little area in the South.

Brown: And you said that was Philadelphia, Mississippi?

Joiner: Um-hm, um-hm.

Brown: Okay. Bringing it back a little bit, you graduated from high school in 1961—

Joiner: Um-hm.

Brown: —correct? And you started at Ball State the fall of that same year?

Joiner: Um-hm.

Brown: Why did you want to pursue education?

Joiner: It was expected. My great-grandfather was a teacher, my grandmother was a teacher, my mother was a teacher.

[40:00]

So it was expected. And my mother told me, she says, "Look"—I was thinking about being a nurse, and my father told me, he said, "I don't want you to become a nurse because I don't want you to do shift work." His sister was a nurse, and she would have to work midnights. And he didn't want me to do that because of his concerns about safety. And so my mother said, "Look, you become a teacher." She said, "You never know. Your husband may be able to take care of you and care for you, he may not be able to. But you will always have work"—she didn't know. (laughs) Today teaching is not dependable—but "you will always have work if you are a teacher." And so I said, Well, I just might as well go on to be a teacher.

[41:00]

But at that time, women, and African American women in particular, didn't have anything else to do. We could get married out of high school. We could become a secretary, a nurse, teacher, or social worker. So really, that's all that we had to essentially choose from. If you wanted to go

into medicine or if you wanted to go into law or anything else, it was difficult. The males, even the black males, made it very difficult for you back then. Now you young people have the world open for you. But back then, those were occupations that we could easily go into.

Brown: And how would males make it difficult for women?

Joiner: How? (laughs) Well, when you go to school, you work in groups.

[42:00]

You'd have to—uh—what is it called?—do cooperative learning, those types of things. Where're you going to live? Where're you going to go shower? Where're you going to—when you're living in the dormitories? See, if you're going to go into a med school, you're going to live on a campus. They have to have a space for you to live. Who're you going to study with? Anyone who's going to take you seriously enough that, hey, you are a student and you are serious about your learning, so we can work together and not have to become a romantic type of thing. You see? So females have had a hard time. A hard way to go.

[43:00]

I just was reading the *Secret Lives of the First Ladies*, and it's interesting how they had to make—there is no job description for her. And each first lady has to make her own way. She gets no salary, and so she has to make her own way. Females traditionally have had to make their own way and find a spot for themselves. But we were accepted in those fields of secretary, social worker, teacher, nurse, or get married and depend on your husband, back then.

Brown: Speaking of females on campus, there's something called an M-R-S Degree where women were said to go to school to find a husband. Did you ever feel that kind of pressure?

Joiner: No, I had a boyfriend before—(laughs)—before I went to Ball State. Yeah. We met in—as a matter of fact, that's Bill.

[44:00]

We've been married for about fifty years. (laughs)—Anyway. But we were dating when I came to Ball State. So that pressure was not on me.

Brown: Okay. So you met your husband in Gary before—?

Joiner: We went to high school together. We went to the senior prom together.

Brown: Oh. Okay. And why did you choose Ball State?

Joiner: Well, I really didn't know where I wanted to go to college. I really hadn't thought about it. And I knew I was going to have to go to college because that was one of the requirements in my family. I had a friend who went to high school with me, and she came home and she was

talking about Ball State. And I said, "Oh." She said, "Where're you going to college?" I said, "I don't know," I hadn't thought about it.

[45:00]

And so she invited me to come down to Ball State and visit her one weekend, and I did. And so I came. And as I said, the Lord has blessed me. I've been in the secret place of the Most High God because I have been able to find a sweet spot all my life, and live and stay in that sweet spot. When I came here, I liked it. We were some of the first non-white to live in the dormitory. We were very insulated here at Ball State. People were nice to us, they took good care of us, we never wanted for anything. Now, those people who did not live in the dormitory—and there were very few of us who lived in the dormitories—lived in off-campus housing.

[46:00]

We could not live in any housing that was near the university. The African American students had to go into town, into the black areas. And that's the only place that they could find housing if they were not living in the dorm. And as I said, there were very few African Americans that lived in the dorm. They had maybe two in Crosley, three in Brady, and of course all these other buildings hadn't been built. Because behind Woodworth Hall, those were soybean fields and cornfields. All that. I think they started building Noyer my sophomore year I think. That was the first one that they built. And then they had—what's that building, the dorm?—Demonte. Is it still Demonte?

Brown: No ma'am. (both at same time)

Joiner: It is? Okay. Okay. (both at same time)

Brown: Oh.

Joiner: Demonte.

[47:00]

We had Demonte. We had Lucina. And then there was some barracks, army barracks, that was housing for girls. And they tore that down, I think in my sophomore year there. And of course they had Elliott for the men. Oh, I don't know if there was another one. There might've been another one for the men. I'm not sure. But that was all that was here. But anyway, the off-campus housing for African Americans was very poor. And it was some of the students who saw the discrepancies between the types of housing that they started pushing for housing to open up for African Americans around the school, that's near the school, that's off-campus housing.

[48:00]

To the extent that it's done now, I do not know. But I know when I went to school here, that was not allowed. And they would congregate in the Tally and wait for their buses to ride home. But

as a result of that, we stayed on the campus. When I said we, our little group. Connie Winfrey and I, we're from Gary; my roommate Nancy Joe and Ida Lou from Indianapolis; and then of course a couple of the others that were in Wood Hall and-uh—can't even think of the other hall—So we would kind of stay together, we had fun together. We'd stay up three and four o'clock in the morning playing cards. We had a ball. But we didn't get caught up in the other things that were going on around us because we had the support of each other.

[49:00]

When you have a support system, you can make it. So we had the support of each other, and we had a ball. We were very insulated, we had no trouble with our professors, we had no trouble with any of the girls that we lived with in the halls. We ate together, we visited each other in their rooms and—But we did notice, when we went to class and we were walking on the campus and they were with their boyfriends, we became invisible. They would not speak to us. Now we did notice that. But because we had our support system, it didn't bother us. We said, Oh well. But we knew that that was evidently one of the unwritten rules.

[50:00]

Now, as an adult—and I graduated and then I left and came back as a board member of the alumni. We would come and have dinners and we would—various functions. And I would be by myself sitting with the table of people, and especially the guys, you would hear them talk about, Yes, professor such and such and such. You know, he really took care of us. I said, "Took care of us? What does he mean?" They would turn their, I guess, fair-haired boys or fair-haired whoever onto various programs, various programs that they could use that would help them later, or scholarships—I'm just imagining this. But he said, "Yeah, he really looked out for us and took care of us."

[51:00]

We would hear them talking about—this never happened for any of us. We were treated well. Nothing was given to us, nothing was taken from us. We earned everything that we got. We were insulated against anything bad happening to us, but we were not mentored. And I imagine you would have to ask, but we didn't know the questions to ask. We did not have the experience. As a matter of fact, I never was in a non-black situation until I came to Ball State. This was my first experience of interacting with white people. My first as a college student. I was in an all black elementary school, all black junior high school—middle school—so this was my first time interacting.

[52:00]

So I did not know the questions to ask or how to get involved beyond that of going to class, getting my work done, and figuring out how to do that. Now, it's my understanding now that Ball State has all kinds of mentoring and tutoring programs and—well, we did not have that back then.

Brown: Okay. And you mentioned this is the first time—you went to an all black high school and middle school. How was that transition for you?

Joiner: (laughs) It was interesting. I think I was more curious than anything else. Yeah. No, I went to an all black high school, middle school, and grade school. This was my first time going to a majority school where I was in the minority. It was interesting.

[53:00]

I didn't suffer any adverse effects. I never thought any more about it, but it was a curiosity. I just learned, I observed, and I just took mental notes. I learned the unwritten (laughs) rules.

Brown: And what were those rules?

Joiner: Well, the first thing, if you don't ask questions, you're not going to be given (laughs) any information. Okay? So I didn't what questions to ask, so I'm sure that there were certain things that I could've taken advantage of and used if I had known what questions to ask. But by the same token, I knew that other people who were not of color would probably get preferential treatment over me.

[54:00]

That kind of thing. So this is something that you just learn. That's as I said, you learn the rules. There're certain things that I didn't even try to ask for because I probably—and I probably should not have done that, but—that I wouldn't ask because I knew I probably was not going to be granted certain things. So I just didn't do it. But we got through; we got an excellent, excellent, excellent education. When we got out of Ball State, we were prepared.

[55:00]

All the Ball State graduates that I know of that came back and that were teaching, they were heads and shoulders above all of the other, in education, above all of the other new teachers that were in the field. Heads and shoulders above them. Then, as I (laughs) went on and the charter school movement came about, I said, "Whoa" when Ball State started licensing all of these charter schools. They licensed I know at least five, maybe as much as eight, in the Gary school system. Now I am bitter. You see, (laughs) before I (laughs) didn't become incensed and bitter, but I'm bitter now. Yes, I am retired, but I came to Ball State when it was a teacher's college. As—I think my junior year it became a university—and Ball State has turned out excellent teachers.

[56:00]

Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of teachers that they've turned out. Now these same teachers that they have turned out are losing jobs because the school systems are losing students because the charter schools are taking the students. And when your population dwindles, they have to get rid of teachers. And so now these same teachers that Ball State has done such a

magnificent job in educating and preparing for education, they're not getting jobs because school systems are not hiring. I know the Gary school system's not hiring. They're in the throes of letting teachers go. And then where do these teachers have to go? If they go into the charter schools that Ball State has licensed, they're going in for half the salaries.

[57:00]

So I am very incensed and I'm very upset about that. And I have mentioned it. There's a lady, excellent special needs teacher, that refuses to give any money. She said, "Don't even call me until you can do something about this situation that you have caused with charter schools." So that's where I'm standing now with Ball State. Through all the civil rights, through all the everything else, I tended to be pretty even—I knew it was wrong, but I did not get incensed. But I am incensed about this because I don't think that many people realize that the genesis of charter schools came about in the South, during the time of desegregation, when the schools were being desegregated.

[58:00]

And these parents who refused to allow their children, who did not want their children to go to school with African American children found a way to get around the system. They started charter schools, using public funds. Yes. Charter schools use public funds. That's how they started in the Deep South. I used to know the name of the states but I can't remember them anymore. That's the genesis of charter schools. Now, it's coming, it's here now. All up north, all in Indiana. Now, what is going to happen is some charter schools, they have-uh—I don't know. It may be in all of them, I don't know—they have a lottery system, where you get—who is to say that the lottery system is fair?

[59:00]

Now, I know one thing that they do in the Gary area is that when they get children from the traditional public schools into the charter schools and they're not working out, they let their parents know, Well, your child is not working out here so we can't keep them anymore. This is after the state has paid the per capita head for every child, for that child. Then they come back to the traditional public school, but we don't get the money with which to educate them with. See? So that is not good. That incenses me also. And then the fact that when you (laughs) get Governor Pence—and it was on the news today and it's been on the news this week—saying that—what is it?—Religion?

[1:00:00]

That people who are of a certain religion, they don't have to hire people that are not their religion? Can't you see this going into the school system? And we're going to go back to the way it was before segregation where we're having, quote, unquote, separate but equal schools, when actually they were separate and still unequal schools? I see that going back that way. And it just hurts me and disappoints me so much just to know the part that Ball State in the state of Indiana has played in that, in licensing charter schools. And when you think about the fact that there is

not a charter school that I am aware of in Muncie, Indiana. So that's where my anger (laughs) is lying now.

Brown: Right. I can see that.

[1:01:00]

Really.

Joiner: Now see, it doesn't bother me. I am retired. But when I think about what a wonderful education this school has given to teachers and what good work those teachers do and could be doing, and they can't get work now. If they get work, if they get in the charter schools, it's going to be for less than what the traditional school—It just bothers me. But the fact that it might be leading us to, years down—I might not live to see it—but years down the road, wherein we will not be able to get a good, free education because they're plucking the cream of the crop off. There's something very insidious about charter schools.

[1:02:00]

And I'm just very uncomfortable with it.

Brown: Okay. So when you were at Ball State—actually, when you were pursuing your teaching degree, you said you didn't ask certain questions because you didn't know to. What kind of questions didn't you ask?

Joiner: Okay, such as, there are some students that have come out in certain fields. And I said, "How did you know to get into this particular course of study to come out in this field?" "Oh. Well, my guidance counselor, I guess they took some tests, and looked at my tests and said that my strengths and talents like here," and they steered this girl into this particular field.

[1:03:00]

I didn't know to do that. They didn't have that when I was here. I didn't know to ask for what scholarships might be available. Though my parents were able to pay for my education. Again, here I'm at an alumni dinner, and there is this guy who's sitting there and he is the head and owner of a big CPA [Certified Public Accountants] firm. And he's bragging about the fact that his daughter got a full ride here at Ball State. Why? Because she took golf, golf was her area, so she got a golf scholarship and she's a minority. How is she a minority? Because she's a female. See those types of things, of information that we could use, we don't get.

[1:04:00]

We didn't—let me put it this way—we didn't get. And I did not know to ask. Up north, I doubt very seriously if they know that there are golf scholarships that students can get. Or there would be going into golf, going—See there, these kinds of things that, questions still that could be asked that would help students to go through school. The mentoring process that would help

guide and lead students through schools that would help them and make it easier for them. I did not know to ask, and I still might not know many of the questions to ask. But I'm saying that the mentoring process within the schools could have been better for African Americans, it was not.

[1:05:00]

But it was there in place for the white students.

Brown: And when you were on campus, did you notice that?

Joiner: No, I said I found that out after I became a mature adult. And then thought back on my experience. All we knew, we knew to go to school, to go to class, to get our work, and to make our grades so that we could graduate. And that's essentially what we did. We got no more and no less than what we came for. That's it. And we were very insulated. We lived a happy, happy life. We lived good. We found a sweets spot and we lived in that sweet spot. We didn't raise any—the ones that—there was (laughs) guy, I called him the angry young man.

[1:06:00]

He is now a-uh, he was a state's attorney. Never lost a case. He's a graduate, I won't call his name, but he stayed angry all the time. He was just angry all the time. But I guess he knew what the rest of us were not mature enough to see and could not see. And he's still angry (laughs) when he comes back to the university. He is still angry. Because he was able to see things that we couldn't see and, evidently, we were not mature enough to understand what he was trying to articulate to us.

Brown: And this young man was African American?

Joiner: Um-hm. (laughs) He's an old man now, but he was young then. I think the males were more militant than we were.

[1:07:00]

Because as females, we were always at home, cared for and sheltered and insulated. And they were like, out there.

Brown: And before we talked about your parents were strict. How did that factor into your education and going away to college?

Joiner: I knew that when I went away to college, the morals and mores that we had had at home? Oh no, you don't stray from them. I knew that. I knew I could not come home with any bad reports. I knew that. Not that I had been threatened with anything. Not that I feared my parents or—no. It was just something in me that said, Hey. There're certain things we do, there're certain things that we don't do.

[1:08:00]

And that's just the way I was raised. This is us.

Brown: Okay. And when you were here, were you a part of any extracurricular activities?

Joiner: Unh-uh. No. Oh, I did, we had a interest group. We were Kappa Tau Sigmas. And we were an AKA interest group. And I was very involved with them. And my parents are not Greek, so they didn't belong to any sorority or fraternity, so I really was not drawn one way or the other, whether it was Delta Sigma Theta or AKA. Those were the only two—no. Delta Sigma Theta was the only African American sorority that was on campus.

[1:09:00]

And then of course they got this little Kappa Tau Sigma, which was an AKA interest group. And the Kappa Tau Sigmas were told then, Well, you got Delta Sigma Theta. Why do you need another sorority? And then you (laughs) stop and look, you had all of these white sororities. All of these white Greek fraternities, and you want to limit us to one? That's what Maxine told—and I forget which president that was. I forget which one—And so we never did get, while we were here, get an AKA sorority on campus. But I was very involved with that little interest group. And were were, it was about—what?—thirty of us. And so we formed a support system for each other. We had fun.

[1:10:00]

We would have parties and things like that. And then there was only Kappas, was only the one black Greek organization. That was Kappa Alpha Psi, while we were here. I'm sure that there're others there now.

Brown: So you mentioned that the president at the time would not let you—?

Joiner: Now, no no. I said I think it was the president. This was told to me. I was not instrumental in trying to get the Kappa Tau Sigma interest group. You had to go through certain procedures is my understanding to even get an interest group. And they were told that you've got Delta Sigma Theta. Why don't you all just go on and join Delta Sigma Theta?

[1:11:00]

Well, these were young women whose mothers and aunts and sisters were AKAs from Indianapolis and around—and they wanted an AKA sorority, as opposed to Delta Sigma Theta. The reason I joined the Kappa Tau Sigmas was because my friends belonged. I didn't (laughs) care one way or the other. Because as I said, there's no Greek history in my background. So I wouldn't care one way after the other. But my friends belong. And the ones that we lived all in Woodworth Halls, and so they belonged because they had aunts and mothers that were AKAs. And that's why I joined. That's the only reason.

Brown: So you and your friends were mostly a part of Alpha Kappa Alpha or AKA.

Joiner: Yes, but it wasn't that. It was Kappa Tau Sigma then. This was years after we left, several years after we left, before they got the sorority AKA.

[1:12:00]

Brown: Interesting.

Joiner: Yeah.

Brown: When you were on campus, were there strict laws?

Joiner: Strict laws?

Brown: As in curfews?

Joiner: Yes, we did have curfew. And I can't remember—I think we had the ten o'clock during the weekdays and midnight during the weekends. We had to be in by midnight. But if you were not going to come in, you could sign out. But you had to tell where you were going to be or something. Yeah. Um-hm. We had no co-ed dorms. None. And the guys could only come in the lounge area and stay in the lounge area—not stay, but visit you in the lounge area. We did not have telephones in the rooms. We got telephones in our room I guess when we were sophomores.

[1:13:00]

But when I came in as a freshman, we had to go to the payphone in the hall and call out. Let's see—no TVs in the rooms. We had one TV and it was down in the lounge. And do you know we all got along well with that TV? (laughs) We had no arguments, no anything about that TV. If someone was watching the TV, you sat down and watched what they were watching. If they got up and left, then you could turn the TV. I do not remember in four years any type of disagreement over a program on the TV. And when Martin Luther King was killed, everybody was watching the news. When Kennedy got killed, everybody was there watching the news and crying, there in the—

[1:14:00]

We never had (laughs) problems with that TV. And none of us had TVs in our rooms. They were not allowed. I don't think the electrical system at that time would handle it, nor phones.

Brown: So you mention—

Joiner: Nor computers. (laughs) Nothing.

Brown: So you mentioned when Kennedy—John F. Kennedy, the president at that time—was killed, you all were watching it on the TV?

Joiner: Um-hm, in the lounge. That one (laughs) TV, yes. It was one of those floor model TVs.

Um-hm. We didn't have the big screen or anything. It was one of those floor model TVs and we were all sitting around watching it. It was like another world, isn't it? (laughs)

Brown: And what was the reaction like? Was it the same among everybody?

Joiner: Everybody. Even with Martin Luther King. Everybody.

[1:15:00]

Brown: And with some of the other civil rights movements going on at the time, did you all see more of those? Like the more controversial and the marches and things like that? Did you all see (both at same time) those on TV?

Joiner: I don't remember. I don't remember anybody discussing or saying anything about it. I do not remember that.

Brown: Okay. Did you ever—we talked about the discrimination that was going on in the housing around the campus. How would you say your relationship was with the Muncie community at large?

Joiner: We didn't deal with the Muncie community. We really were—I said we were insulated here—we stayed on campus. The off campus students would tease us, and they said we would hide. (laughs) They said we hid in the dorms. But we didn't. We had no reason or no need. Everything we needed was here.

[1:16:00]

Even as an adult now thinking back on it with the housing situation that's different now, I think I would want to continue to live in the dorm. Why would I want to have an apartment that I would have to clean, I would have to cook for myself. Why? I like living in the dorm where I didn't have the upkeep; my breakfast, my lunch, and my dinner was served to me; I didn't have dishes to wash; I didn't have to go shop for groceries. We had to, on Fridays, the cafeteria was closed. So we went out to eat. That was the only time. There was a little diner—Oh, I can't think of what the name of that diner was. It was there on University Avenue, next to the drugstore.

[1:17:00]

And I can't think of that man who owned the drugstore. We integrated that one. We never saw any African Americans in there eating. And so we called to see if any blacks came to eat there, were allowed to eat there. And they said, Yeah. You can come in. So we did. We went in and we sat down to order, and all the cooks in the back were black. And you could see them all looking out of the window from the kitchen, (laughs) looking at us. (laughs) Because we were the—We said, Well, we must be the first ones to come here. But I remember, we did venture out and we did that. And I can't remember the name of that little restaurant. It was right next to—was there a Dalby's drugstore or something?

[1:18:00]

There on the corner of—___ maybe ___(??)—if you walk straight down the street here at University, there was a drugstore that was there. And then right next to it was that little restaurant. And the food was good. We had mashed potatoes and gravy and roast beef and everything. Yeah. But I think we were the first ones to go there. Although all the cooks back there were African American. They were so happy to see us in there. (laughs)

Brown: And there was no resistance to that?

Joiner: No. We called first. No, there was no resistance. No.

Brown: So you mentioned that one summer, when you were going to Mississippi, you all heard of the three—or four—three or four civil rights—three civil rights workers being killed?

Joiner: Oh, no no no. We were not going there.

[1:19:00]

I was—I don't know how old I was—I must've been in my twenties then when we heard about it up north. But then we would constantly travel in the summers going back and forth, yeah. But it had happened, we were still up north. And we went down there, it was no too long after they had that murder. That's when the civil rights workers started pouring into that area. It was called a COFO [Council of Federated Organizations] building—and I don't know what those are acronyms for—but that's when we heard the large bomb explosion. And my grandfather came in and said, "Yeah. They just blew up the COFO building."

[1:20:00]

And so that was one of the times that I got kind of afraid. But we were totally insulated down there. I never felt fear—as a matter of fact, we had more freedom down there as children than we did up north because we had to stay on our block up north. We had relatives all over, so we would go from one relative to the next. We grew like Topsy down there. Just get up in the morning, and we'd just rip and run, but everybody was watching out, playing with our cousins, watching out for us, see. We had more fun. But we had the freedom, but because African Americans in the South, whole families tended to live in the same areas, in the same block. So we were all just taken care of. And we had more fun and true freedom.

[1:21:00]

And it saddens me that children today cannot have—it's not safe for children just to rip and run and grow like Topsy in the summertime because it's not safe anymore.

Brown: Okay. Do you remember being on campus when you heard of Malcolm X being shot?

Joiner: Yes. It didn't impact us the way Kennedy and Martin Luther King's death affected us. At

the time, we didn't know a whole lot about him. He was more of a curiosity to us. We didn't know a lot about him until after his death. And all the information and what he tried to do. And his life story came out and we started reading about that.

[1:22:00]

That's when it impacted us, after we found out what his life was all about and what he was about. That's when it impacted us, but not at the time of his death. ____ He or It ____ (??) was more of a curiosity.

Brown: Okay. On campus, what was the relationship like between African Americans in the African American community as a whole on campus?

Joiner: I don't think the African American community, as a whole, did much here on campus. I know some of the young people would come, if we had a party—like, a large party. Like the Kappas would give a large party—some of them would come. But as far as a relationship between the African American community in Muncie and the few African Americans here on campus, I don't think that there was, to my knowledge, a relationship.

[1:23:00]

I don't think there was. Not that I know of. (both talk at same time)—I didn't really know anybody that lived in the city. There was one family, Dr. Thomas. Penny Thomas and her husband—I don't know what his name was—he was the only dentist in the city. He was African American. And I think they were the only, I would say, economically comfortable people at that time. He was well-known. And Penny was our sponsor. You know, you have to have a sponsor for your interest group? And our interest group for AKA was Kappa Tau Sigma.

[1:24:00]

And she was an AKA and so she agreed to be our sponsor. And so she was about the only one that I knew. And I don't know that she-uh—we never met anybody else. I'm saying, Muncie is a totally different place today, as far as African American people having significant income, homes, and—Socioeconomically, it is totally different today than it was back then. Totally different.

Brown: Okay. And what about the feeling between African American students on campus?

Joiner: Each other?—

Brown: Um-hm.

Joiner: —On campus?

Brown: Yes ma'am.

Joiner: We got along.

[1:25:00]

I think the AKAs were jealous of the Deltas and the Deltas were jealous of the AKAs because when they would have their time to get members—and I shouldn't say AKAs. I should say the Kappa Tau Sigmas. We tried to attract their possible members and they tried to (laughs) attract our possible members. But as far as any real antagonistic episodes between any of us, I am not aware of any. We tended to pretty much get along.

Brown: Okay. What were your relationships like with your professors here?

Joiner: Good. I never had problems with any of them. Whatever I didn't like or care about a professor, (laughs) it was the same thought that the other students had, whether they were of color or of non-color.

[1:26:00]

I didn't have any problems with any of them. I felt that I was treated fairly. Yeah, I felt that I was treated fair. Whatever I put into the particular subject area or coursework I got out of it. Yeah. I was treated fairly I felt. I was graded on the same grading scale. If I needed to talk with a professor, I made an appointment and they were always there and they were always open to talk with me. So I had no problems. And I have not heard of any of the other students that would have any problems.

[1:27:00]

I know one of my friends talked about one professor, and I won't call his name, but they say that he was horrible. They say that it would break his fingers to have to give an A. He'd only give Cs. And so I said, "Oh really." So I made up my mind I was going to make an A out of his class. I studied, I mean I studied. I went and he said that you could have extra credit. I signed up for every extra credit. Guess what? I got an A. (laughs) I was one of the few that got an A. But I worked for it. I earned it. And that was across the board. You could hear everybody talk about him, how the highest grade he would ever give was a C. Well, but the A was there if you wanted it bad enough.

Brown: And you lived in Woodworth when you were here, an all girls dorm.

[1:28:00]

Joiner: Um-hm.

Brown: Did you all, having few African Americans living students living in there, did you all ever experience any tension between any of the other girls living in the dorm?

Joiner: ___Unh-uh___(??). As I said, we got along fine. Beautifully. We would visit each other's

room, we'd laugh and talk, we sat at the same tables at dinner. Do you guys have family-style dining? Do you still have that—(both at same time)

Brown: Yes, you can.

Joiner: Then you have the maître d's to come and seat you.

Brown: No. (laughs)

Joiner: Oh yes. Well, we would go and we would get our food. And then we'd have our maître d'. He would take our tray and take us to a table. And he would hold our chair and we would sit down. And he would put our food on our table. And then he would take the tray and he would—That's how we ate dinner. And so we really didn't choose who we ate with. He would sit us where he would seat us.

[1:29:00]

And we all got along fine. We'd have nice conversations and everything. But as I said, when we left going to class and they were with their boyfriends, that's when we became invisible. They did not speak to us, as though they didn't even see us. Then we get back in the dorm, get back in class, everything was fine. We were just like long lost friends.

Brown: And how did that difference of treatment make you all feel?

Joiner: We just knew that's the way it was. That was life. That's just the way it was.—And we knew what to expect.

Brown: Okay. So you graduated from Ball State in 1965.

Joiner: Um-hm.

Brown: What did you do after graduation?

Joiner: After graduation?

Brown: Yes ma'am.

[1:30:00]

Joiner: I went to graduate school in Chicago, which __ was or is __ (??) nice. My master teacher that I did my student teaching under was a graduate of DePaul University. And so she encouraged me to go there. My mother was they type of a person, she says, "You start your graduate work right away because if you don't, once you start working, once you get some paychecks, it's too hard to go back. You get comfortable." So I went on to graduate school. And because my master teacher had talked about DePaul so much—And it was a school where I could go during the day. SO many of them you would have to go at night, but I could go during

the day. I would get on the train.

[1:31:00]

I would catch the South Shore train. And it was a commuter train and it was leave from South Bend and come all the way through to downtown Chicago. And I was at the downtown campus in Chicago. And so I would catch the train, and I would go in and have my classes. And I might have sometimes two or three hours between classes. So I would go down to Marshall Fields, and I would treat to the tearoom. And I would treat myself to lunch. I became a fantastic people watcher. I would go to the—at the time it was Chicago Library. If ever you get to Chicago, and it's no longer the library, but this building was built in the 1800s. No amount of money could replace that building now. Old Man Daley, the first mayor, wanted to tear that building down, and his wife Maggie said, "Unh-un, John. You're not going to touch that building."

[1:32:00]

You would go in that building and it was like four stories. But you would stand on the first floor and you could, there were winding stairways, and you could look all the way up to that fourth floor. But all the walls were inlaid pearl. All of the walls, every bit, in mosaics. All the way up to the top. And then at the top there was a dome, and it was inlaid mother of pearl. Gorgeous. Now that's on the Washington Street side. On the Randolph Street side, all of the work around there was gold leaf. And the artisans that did it, they are gone. They came over from Europe. Anyway, he wanted to tear that building down. Anyway, it's still there.

[1:33:00]

I would spend hours in there. I would do my research at that—at that time, it was a library—I would do my research there, I'd go shopping. It was wonderful. That's how I got to know Chicago, because I went to school there.

Brown: So you went to school in Chicago but you still lived in Gary?

Joiner: Um-hm. Gary is interesting. I can get to downtown Chicago from Gary quicker than most people who live in the Chicago suburbs can get to downtown. It is a thirty-minute train ride from Gary to downtown Chicago. And what's so interesting, that little train is a commuter train. And people ride that train for years and years because they're going to work from South Bend to Chicago, and from Michigan City and East Chicago to Chicago.

[1:34:00]

The same conductors have worked that train for years, so they get to know all of their passengers. So you can get on that train and if you are sleepy, you can go to sleep. And guess what? They wake you up before your stop to make sure that you get off and get there on time. One (laughs) girl got here purse snatched as she was getting on in Chicago. And she was just so upset. And so she says, "But my ticket was in my purse." And the conductor said, "You know you've been riding this train for years. Get on the train." (laughs) "Just get on. There's no

problem.” But it became a family. And that was another thing that made it so nice. So anyway, I had the best of both worlds. I got a chance to spend a lot of time in a world-class city without having to live there.

[1:35:00]

And I still spend, because of my experience going to graduate school in Chicago, we still spend a lot of time in Chicago going shopping and things like that.

Brown: And you got your Master’s in 1969?

Joiner: I think so. You know, things are getting really fuzzy. (laughs) It’s so long ago. Yeah, Um-hm, I think so. Because I started right after I graduated because of my mother. She said, “If you let any time lapse, it’s too hard to go back. You’re in the studying mode now. Just keep it up. You got, what, three years maybe and it’ll be over with. But don’t get out of the studying mode.” And she was right. She was right.

Brown: Okay. And that was from DePaul University.

[1:36:00]

So moving forward a little bit, you were on the Ball State University Alumni Council from 2001 to 2009. What was that like?

Joiner: Interesting. (laughs) I don’t know exactly why I was on there, except that I did make considerable contributions to the university. And one of the things that did bother me is that they have like their—uh board of—is it the board of directors?—but their trustee board. Not the trustee board. But some of the people who are trustees are on that particular board—I can’t think of the name, but the president, the vice president, dat-da dat-da dat-da da—Anyway, whatever the alumni council wants to do, they set that agenda before they have the big meeting where all the other board members are.

[1:37:00]

And so it’s essentially rubber-stamped by everybody else. So I didn’t feel that I had any input as to getting a vote to many any kind of a difference. I did serve on that alumni council because they do need representatives from various sectors, and I was African American, from Northwest Indiana. So I fit two of those requirements. They did not have anybody from Northwest Indiana who was also African American and female. So that was one of the reasons I think that—and my contributions—that I think that I was there. I did become a contributor to the university because I felt that the education was excellent.

[1:38:00]

And I gave because I wanted students to have access—and we give to the scholarship fund—to

have scholarships. And then we started a black scholarship fund. And we were given that so that black students could have access to money to help them get through school.

Brown: Okay. And what was your relationship like with the alumni on the council?

Joiner: Tentative. They were nice. They would say hello and they would chat, but I was not one of the in-groups. I was not one that they would come sit down, Come on sit down. Let's have dinner or anything of that type. No. Tentative.

[1:39:00]

And as far as the alumni people that worked for the alumni association, they were very standoffish, except for Sue and Ed. They were friendly, but the others were not. And as a matter of fact, the people that we lived with—I wanted to say this—in the dorms and we were friendly in the dorms and in class, after graduation I've not had any contact with any—there was one lady that lives up there in Northwest Indiana and when we see each other, we speak and pass the pleasantries of the day, but there was no on—you live with someone (laughs) for four years—but there was no ongoing relationship after Ball State. Whereas with our friends that—my roommate and Connie and her roommate—we're still friends after all these years.

[1:40:00]

Though they live in different cities, we still call each other and we talk. So the ongoing relationships were not there. And it's the same thing with the alumni council. There was there all of those years, it was a tentative actually non-relationship. Um-hm. Even when I was there—sitting down, chatting, talking, and sharing with each other—we didn't do that. They did it with each other, but we didn't do that.

Brown: Were you the only African American on the council?

Joiner: No, there were two or three others. We were friends. We would sit, chat. But there were two or three others.

Brown: And why do you think there was that disconnect?

Joiner: I don't know. (laughs) Black people being black, and what people being white. (laughs) Just nothing in common I guess.

[1:41:00]

Or we all may have had different agendas. I really don't know and I really haven't thought that much about it. It did not bother me. I noticed it but it did not bother me because when the meeting was over, I was in my car headed back home.

Brown: Okay. You also served on the Black Alumni Constituent Society or BACS Board of Directors. What was that experience like?

Joiner: It was interesting. We had fun. We were able to chat and talk more. I don't think that we chatted and talked about anything of significance, of anything that was substantial. I don't know that they got a whole lot done, in that I don't know if their hands were tied by the university or what or they didn't have an active agenda.

[1:42:00]

But I do know that they were able to have reunions every two years. And people would come back. Actually, I think Ed told us at one time, our only reason for existing was for us to engage the alumni. Okay? And so I guess we were doing what we were supposed to do, engage the alumni. But I guess we engaged them by having the reunions and then they would come back. But I don't know that they actually gave a lot to the university financially.

[1:43:00]

It takes a long time for, when a person graduates from—I am finding—from—and I know it happened with me—from college, and you have a job. It takes maturity I think to know that, Hey. It's time to give back. You slid in on someone else's coattail. It's time for you to provide a medium or a means for someone else to make someone else's life easier. And so I don't know how successful they have been in getting the black alums to give back to the university in a consistent, meaningful way. I don't know about that. I guess I think that was one of the reasons that they exist, to engage and wow the alumni.

[1:44:00]

Brown: And how did your experience on the board of directors for the constituent society compare with your experience on the alumni council?

Joiner: Well, it was certainly not as cold of an affair. (laughs) It was a much warmer and friendly thing. And I thought that we at least could bring things to the table there, discuss them and vote on them for something that we decided. Not to serve as a rubber stamp for an agenda that had already been set by the executive board. So that was the difference between the two that I saw. We could bring up an idea, we could discuss something that we wanted to do in the constituency society, and vote to do it. Whereas with the alumni council, the executive board decided what they wanted to do, how it was going to be done.

[1:45:00]

They handed it down to us and then we rubber-stamped it. Everybody rubber-stamped it. And I would imagine, I don't know if it's just the—But I do know that there were people who were on the executive council that were also trustees. So really, I don't know. I really don't have a feel for that, but I didn't feel very effective.

Brown: Okay.

Joiner: And I feel that I was on there because of the requirement that certain portions of—Oh, it has to be diverse. And I fit one of the criteria or some of the criteria for diversity in that female, black, Northwest Indiana.

[1:46:00]

Brown: Okay. So moving it forward just a little bit, you worked in the Gary school system for over forty years, until you retired in 2011. What was that like?

Joiner: I worked during a time where you could actually get your work done. You can't do that anymore. You could be creative, you could try things, you could take your children on field trips, you could just see your children blossom. But you cannot do that anymore. _____(??) you're working, you're bound by red tape, you're bound by people in the legislature who, if they are in education, they've been away from education for so long they've forgotten what it's about. School is no more fun for children nor for teachers.

[1:47:00]

You're not given the latitude to do your job. And I came up during a time when you had the latitude to do your job. You had the latitude to make mistakes. You know, you learn from making mistakes. And we had the latitude to make mistakes and—it was just, it was nice. It was nice. And I retired because I was not feeling effective anymore because your hands get tied. You're encumbered with red tape. And so I retired. I am back now. I work three hours a day as an intervention specialist. And I can do more of what I used to do when I was enjoying teaching.

Brown: And in Elementary Education, they often say that many teachers don't make it past five years of teaching now.

[1:48:00]

Why do you think your career was so long?

Joiner: Well, most of the teachers that started with me or that were teaching before I did, they taught for as long as I did. It's now I think teachers that have come in during the latter years that get burned out very quickly. They get disillusioned and they get burned out very quickly. When you take someone's creativity and their ability to do their job and be effective in doing their jobs away from them, you get burned out real quickly.

Brown: And you had mentioned that your mother was a teacher and that you come from a family of teachers really. How did this affect your teaching style?

[1:49:00]

Joiner: My teaching style was strictly influenced by Ball State, from what I learned at Ball State. I never saw my mother teach, except for when she would, working with me. Your parents are your first teachers. So I never saw my mother teach. So what I learned from teaching was

directly impacted, and which I must say is very positively, by Ball State. My grandmother, I never—yes, I did—I saw my grandmother teach and it was in a little country school where she had about two or three different grade levels around a potbellied stove. And that was charming. My great-grandfather died when I was a baby, so I didn't know—but I would hear tales of him. He was a math teacher. And I have some of his books, and one of them was a little—What's it?—a __Guffrey__(??) reader?

[1:50:00]

And he was teaching himself Spanish in one—He had one __Guffrey__(??) reader Spanish book and he had one __Guffrey__(??) reader French book. And he was teaching himself French and he was teaching himself Spanish. But he was a math teacher. And these was the tales that I hear, That he and his friends would get together on the front porch. And they would try to solve these hard, difficult math problems. And when one would get them, you'd just hear them laugh and slapping each other on the back and (laughs) you would think it was a poker game, but it wasn't. They were solving math problems. And it was to the point where he was so good as a teacher of mathematics that I think he was a—was he a superintendent?—I got his certificate that was signed as something as a superintendent or something. I can't remember.

[1:51:00]

It was signed by the state board of education or something. Anyway, when some of the white people that lived in his area, when their children were having problems with math and they could not help their children, they would send them to papa and he would have to teach them. But I didn't know him. And I never saw my mother teach. What I do in teaching I learn strictly from Ball State, and then from those colleagues who were outstanding master teachers.

Brown: Okay. Well, before we can conclude, is there anything more that we haven't covered in this interview about your life or your career or your experiences at Ball State that you would like to comment on?

Joiner: No, except that I had an excellent education.

[1:52:00]

There were questions and disconnects that I recognized after I graduated and after I matured that didn't impact me while I was here and while I was much younger. And that may be the same experience that a lot of young people that are coming through college might have. But no. I think we've covered about everything.

Brown: Okay. Well, on behalf of the Ball State University African American Alumni Oral History project, thank you so much for your participation today.

Joiner: No problem. It was my pleasure.

[1:52:46]

End of interview